United Nations A/55/PV.65

General Assembly

Fifty-fifth session

Official Records

65th plenary meeting
Thursday, 16 November 2000, 3 p.m.
New York

President: Mr. Holkeri ..... (Finland)

The meeting was called to order at 3 p.m.

Agenda item 59 (*continued*)

Question of equitable representation on and increase in the membership of the Security Council and related matters

Mr. Listre (Argentina) (*spoke in Spanish*): We have already had the opportunity to congratulate you, Sir, on your election as President of the General Assembly. We would now like to express our satisfaction at seeing you preside over these meetings on an issue that is vital to the future of our Organization: Security Council reform. Your authority and ability will undoubtedly contribute to the success of our deliberations.

In resolution 48/26 the General Assembly decided that the best way to tackle Security Council reform was through an Open-ended Working Group. The full membership of this Organization gave the Group the task of examining every aspect of Council reform. It is worth recalling that this task falls exclusively to the Members of the Organization. It is not easy, nor is it free of controversy. Its implications are so important for the Organization that there is a general understanding that the solution must be acceptable to all. It should therefore be reached by consensus.

We reiterate our belief that the most appropriate forum to continue dealing with this arduous and difficult issue is the Working Group, where decisions cannot be rushed nor can artificial time limits be imposed that could be counterproductive to the goal of reforming the Council.

We must bear in mind that reforming the Council does not only entail increasing its membership. It also includes other aspects, such as improving its working methods and the issue of the veto, if we want a more representative, accountable, democratic and transparent Council. All these aspects must be dealt with jointly and resolved.

Our heads of State and Government, meeting in New York at the Millennium Summit, stated in their final Declaration that we should

> "intensify our efforts to achieve a comprehensive reform of the Security Council in all its aspects." (*resolution 55/2, United Nations Millennium Declaration, para. 30*)

The message is clear. I emphasize the words "in all its aspects". That means that there cannot be partial solutions.

The deliberations on working methods, dealt with in Cluster II, deliberations in which our country has actively participated, have been fruitful, and significant progress has been made on a wide series of issues. Consistent with its position, Argentina has strongly supported improving the Council's working methods and increasing its transparency. It has done so both within the Working Group and in the Council itself since becoming an elected member last year. For example, in February this year, during Argentina's Council presidency, the note by the President of the

This record contains the text of speeches delivered in English and of the interpretation of speeches delivered in the other languages. Corrections should be submitted to the original languages only. They should be incorporated in a copy of the record and sent under the signature of a member of the delegation concerned to the Chief of the Verbatim Reporting Service, room C-178. Corrections will be issued after the end of the session in a consolidated corrigendum.

00-75078 (E)

Security Council contained in document S/2000/155 was adopted, formalizing our delegation's proposal that States newly elected to the Council be invited to observe the Council's informal consultations for one month immediately preceding their term of membership.

The deep differences that still exist on reform refer mainly to an increase in the number of permanent members and the question of the veto.

As for the first — an increase in the number of permanent members — Argentina considers that there is no legal basis in some States' claim to become permanent members other than the crude rationale of power. Why should we accept that some States cease to be equal to the rest and become part of the category of the privileged five that are already permanent members? The reason is not to be found in the law. The only reason that could be invoked is that today some of these countries are rich and powerful and are in a better position than they were in 1945. Some are even wealthier and more powerful than those that are still permanent members under the 1945 scheme. Owing to their wealth, they contribute more money to maintaining this Organization, in accordance with the principal of the capacity to pay. In some cases, they contribute voluntarily more than they are required to, and for this the Member States are deeply grateful to them. But those circumstances are not the basis for privileges such as permanent membership and the veto.

My country's traditional position has been to oppose privileges and distinctions within international organizations. That was our position in 1920 in the League of Nations, when we opposed discrimination against the countries that lost the First World War, and it has been our position in this Organization since its inception. We reiterated it in the last general debate, when we said:

> "The vast majority of the international community — seeking to ensure respect for the values of democracy and universality — believes that a new Security Council will have to allow for greater participation by all. This cannot be achieved if new permanent seats — like those established in 1945 — are established. Reform of the Council must allow all States a greater opportunity to participate in the Council, which must not be monopolized by only a few countries. For this reason, Argentina supports exclusively an increase in the number of non-permanent members". (*A/55/PV.27, p. 27*)

The new non-permanent-member seats to be created should continue to be filled on the basis of the criteria established in Article 23, paragraph 1, of the Charter: their contribution to the maintenance of international peace and security and equitable geographical distribution. We think that regional groups should decide how those new seats will be distributed among their member States. As a whole, this procedure has been efficient, and therefore it should be maintained. Regional distribution allows the small countries a greater opportunity to accede to positions within the system of the Organization, compared to the situation if the General Assembly decided the distribution without regional considerations that take rotation into account.

As far as the right of veto is concerned, our position is moderate and realistic. We are not suggesting that the five permanent members should immediately abandon their privileges. We know that they will not do it. What we seek is ways to limit this privilege for a period of time until its final elimination is negotiated. We regard as interesting the proposals to limit it during that interim period to cases involving the application of Chapter VII of the Charter.

We believe that the best way to make progress is to abandon absolute positions and seek rational consensus solutions. We must accept that present circumstances do not justify the repetition of past frameworks. Sterile discussions are what have caused and continue to cause deep divisions within the Organization, and they are holding back progress on the reform of the Council.

We invite the minority of countries that are holding on to archaic privileges, and in doing so obstructing the reform of the Council, to abandon their elitist stance and, in a democratic spirit, be open to the claims of the vast majority of countries that aspire to reform of the Security Council in order to make it more representative, democratic, transparent, accountable and effective.

Sir Jeremy Greenstock (United Kingdom): First, let me thank you, Mr. President, for calling a debate on this agenda item. Allow me to pay tribute to the contribution to the reform debate made by your predecessor as General Assembly President, Mr. Theo-Ben Gurirab, and his two Vice-Chairmen, Ambassadors

Dahlgren and de Saram. The United Kingdom looks forward to working closely with you and your Vice-Chairmen during the coming year.

The need for Security Council reform is more pressing today than it was seven years ago, when the Open-ended Working Group was established to look at the modalities for change. When the Council was last enlarged, in 1965, the United Nations had fewer than 120 members. Today it has 189, and over 30 of those have joined in the last 10 years. It is essential that the Security Council be made more representative of this membership: the membership on whose behalf it acts and whose full confidence it needs when meeting its primary responsibility for international peace and security. It must also work in as transparent a manner as possible, allowing for extensive consultation with non-members as well as with troop contributors and with individuals or organizations with relevant expertise. It must, at the same time, retain the necessary efficiency to tackle the many and complex conflict situations on its agenda in a timely and effective manner.

We are pleased that significant progress has been made over the past year on improving the Council's working practices. On 30 December 1999, in my capacity as President of the Council that month, I issued a note (S/1999/1291) setting out a number of points to improve procedural practice. The provisions of that note have now been put into effect. Matters concerning the Middle East, the Balkans, African States such as Sierra Leone and the Democratic Republic of the Congo, and East Timor have been the subject of briefings and debates in public meetings in the Council Chamber, with the wider membership in attendance, rather than in informal consultations of the Council. The balance between public meetings and informal consultations may still not be quite right, and there is further work to be done on matters relating to participation. But the work of the Council has now become significantly more accessible to non-members, without any diminution of its ability to take effective action.

The Council has, during the reporting period, been prepared to contemplate imaginative procedural innovations when the occasion required — reviving the practice of private Council meetings, for instance. The Council has also shown that it can use new formats to take its work forward. An example is the ambassador-level meeting between Council members and troop contributors that took place in preparation for the Security Council mission to Sierra Leone. In its recent resolution 1327 (2000), on United Nations peace operations, the Council underlined the importance of an improved system of consultation among troop-contributing countries, the Secretary-General and the Security Council. We welcome this undertaking and support its early implementation.

I hope that the Council will continue this welcome trend towards openness, and that it will be prepared to try procedural innovations when necessary in the course of the coming year. In response, it would be good to see the wider membership using the greater opportunities to address the Council to debate points more spontaneously and reactively. The United Kingdom will continue to encourage an evolution in that respect.

However, as many speakers are noting in this debate, far less progress has been made on the equally important issue of Council enlargement. The Open-ended Working Group worked hard on a conference room paper on cluster I issues during the fifty-fourth session. This usefully set out the options and encouraged a more focused debate. As a result, the Vice-Chairmen have set out a number of useful general observations in a further conference room paper annexed to the Working Group's report. In that paper they have identified several areas of general agreement, including on the principle of enlarging both categories of membership. Many States confirmed their support for that principle at the Millennium Summit and in the opening week of this session of the General Assembly, and yet more have done so thus far in this debate. It is also clear that there is broad agreement that expansion must include both developed and developing States. I take this opportunity to reiterate the United Kingdom's full support for these two fundamental principles, which will underpin any final agreement on enlargement.

Of course, the approach that nothing is agreed until everything is agreed is a key principle for the Working Group in its work. But if the Working Group is to make progress, it needs to identify the issues where there is already substantial agreement, and focus its energies on addressing those where agreement remains more elusive. This is just one suggestion for making the Working Group more effective. The United Kingdom encourages you, Mr. President, to look creatively at other ways to make the Working Group a

more effective forum capable of delivering progress on the essential and urgent task of making the Council more representative of today's United Nations membership.

The United Kingdom is committed to making real progress on Security Council reform during the fifty-fifth session of the General Assembly. We stand ready to assist you, Mr. President, and your Vice-Chairmen, with our full support.

Mr. Mangueira (Angola): In the view of the Angolan delegation, the present issue of Security Council reform constitutes one of the most important questions with regard to strengthening the United Nations. In accordance with Article 24 of the Charter, the Security Council has the primary responsibility for the maintenance of international peace and security, and acts on behalf of all Member States of the Organization. It is no wonder, then, that the question of Security Council reform is of particular interest, as it covers issues such as increasing its membership, the use of the veto power and the relationship between the General Assembly and the Security Council itself.

We also cannot forget that the United Nations Charter was adopted at the San Francisco Conference shortly after the end of the Second World War, when among other things, there was recognition of the prestige of great Powers, with their political, economic and military superiority, which allowed those States to impose their main points of view and perspectives.

Since 1945 the world has changed politically and economically. The number of sovereign States has nearly quadrupled, and all of them play an active role in the changes that have taken place in international relations. We see developing countries playing a role in international affairs and in the solving of problems, and we also witness the appearance of new economically powerful States that have undoubtedly contributed to changing old world realities into new ones.

Having acknowledged the role of the United Nations as guarantor of the peace and well-being of peoples in accordance with the purposes and principles of the Charter, it is urgent that we begin to carry out actions to adapt its internal structure to new world realities. That would enable the United Nations to deal rapidly and effectively with the main problems facing the world and to keep its Members from resorting to solutions outside the established framework of its principal organs, especially the Security Council.

There have been many proposals concerning Security Council reform, but, along with preceding speakers, we think that our main goal must be to revitalize and strengthen the United Nations system. Taking into account Articles 23 and 24 of the Charter, and in our own view, the Security Council requires greater internal democracy; its composition should truly reflect the current membership of the Organization and should be based on equitable geographical representation.

As an African State, Angola endorses the Organization of African Unity Harare resolution on Security Council reform. That resolution set out three points: that the membership of the Security Council should be increased to 26, including both permanent and non-permanent members; that Africa must have two permanent seats based on the principle of rotation, with the same rights enjoyed by current permanent members, including the right of veto; and that the decision-making process within the Security Council should be reformed.

We believe that, in that way, we would be acting in the spirit of the Charter, whose Article 23 provides for equitable geographical distribution and whose Article 24 provides for representation of all Member States. Thus, we consider it important to limit all permanent members of Security Council in their use of the right of veto: that privilege must be used only on issues referred to in Article 24 of the Charter. This means that the veto must not be allowed in cases, for instance, of the admission of a new Member.

To reach such goals, it is necessary for permanent members of the Security Council display open political will to better understand the concerns and the strong desires of the majority of States Members of the United Nations, whose interests the permanent members represent, and also to be more flexible on various proposals on Security Council reform.

Another question addressed by the Working Group is the relationship among the Security Council, the General Assembly and the general membership of the United Nations. We consider that question too to be important. First of all, the United Nations Charter clearly establishes the powers of each principal organ, and consequently the Security Council must act within its competence and its responsibilities under the Charter. It is necessary to reach an equilibrium of competency among the General Assembly, the Security

Council and the Secretary-General in order to fulfil and respect the provisions of the Charter. That equilibrium must be adapted to new realities and objectives, such as preventive diplomacy.

As other members have affirmed, an important step is to make the Council's work more transparent. Angola supports further measures which would allow non-members of the Council, particularly the States directly concerned with an issue, to participate more actively in the Council's deliberations, with a view to finding more effective solutions to matters of peace and security.

The Working Group on Security Council reform has been at work for several years, and undoubtedly there has been some progress in the discussion of this matter. All States, whether small or great Powers, must become more actively involved in the reform process in order to achieve more rapidly the strengthening of our Organization in all respects.

Mr. Widodo (Indonesia): I should like, on behalf of the Indonesian delegation, to express our appreciation for the inclusion on the agenda of item 59, "Equitable representation on and increase in the membership of the Security Council and related matters". Let me take this opportunity, Mr. President, also to thank your predecessor, the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Namibia, Mr. Theo-Ben Gurirab, Chairman of the Open-ended Working Group on the Question of Equitable Representation on and Increase in the Membership of the Security Council and Other Matters related to the Security Council, as well as Ambassador John de Saram of Sri Lanka and Ambassador Hans Dahlgren of Sweden, Vice-Chairmen of the Group, for their commendable efforts to make progress in the deliberations during the fifty-fourth session of the General Assembly. We fully recognize the importance of the Working Group as the sole mechanism for implementing the mandate of the General Assembly, and we look forward to its Bureau playing a role in giving the Group new direction when it resumes its work next year.

My delegation is gratified to note that the report of the Working Group (A/54/47) reflects the depth and breadth of the deliberations that took place; these covered both cluster I and cluster II issues in a balanced manner consistent with the objective of finding a comprehensive package of reforms on all aspects, as called for at the Millennium Summit held last September. The report contains numerous observations, including in areas where differences have persisted, especially the question of the expansion of the membership of the Security Council, and it describes the progress that has been made on the Council's working methods and practices. It also lays out some elements that will be useful for reflection and reassessment when the Working Group resumes its work. Taken together with the articulation of positions and the submission of numerous working papers containing ideas and proposals, this will serve as a solid basis for further efforts towards our long-sought goal of a reconstituted Council.

Few questions considered by the United Nations have been the focus of so much attention and debate as that of Security Council reform, because of its far-reaching legal and political ramifications that involve the vital interests of all Member States. It is therefore not surprising that, although seven years have elapsed since deliberations began in the Working Group, a general agreement on substantive issues has continued to elude us, owing to divergent national and regional viewpoints.

It is now universally recognized that the membership and structure inherited from 1945 are outdated and obsolete and do not reflect the political, economic and demographic realities of our time. Notwithstanding that fundamental global shift, the Council's permanent membership has remained the same, while developing nations continue to be disenfranchised. That is an anomaly that cannot be perpetuated.

As the Charter-mandated role of the Security Council is the maintenance of international peace and security, it is incumbent upon us to ensure that the interests of all nations are adequately reflected in its composition: preserving the status quo would have a profoundly negative impact on the Council's functioning in the new millennium. It is pertinent to note that two thirds of the world's population, in the developing countries, is without representation among the permanent members. Hence, that aspect of expansion should be dealt with in order to address the core issue of gross under-representation. Indonesia believes that there exists near-unanimity favouring an increase in that category to include developing countries, which can no longer be marginalized and whose views will have a substantive impact on the functioning of the Security Council.

Likewise, a consensus exists for an increase in the non-permanent membership, which has not taken place since 1965, despite an increase in the total membership of the Organization from 113 to 189. Adequate expansion in this category would ensure more balanced geographic representation, lend greater legitimacy to the Council's decisions, secure broader support for its decisions and facilitate the sharing of responsibility for the maintenance of international peace and security by an increasing number of Member States. Such a quantitative increase would also broaden the participation of all countries in decision-making and thereby promote genuine democracy.

In sum, my delegation believes that a sizeable majority supports an increase in both categories of the Council's membership. While the size of the enlarged Council would depend upon the outcome of further deliberations, Indonesia continues to support the position taken by the non-aligned countries in favour of an additional increase of at least 11 members. In this context, we note the flexibility shown by the United States and its willingness to reconsider this question.

As far as the question of the veto is concerned, its exercise in the past to promote national interests, rather than the interests of the international community as called for under Article 24 of the Charter, is still fresh in the memory of all of us. Such practices jeopardize the credibility of the Security Council in the maintenance of international peace and security. In consequence, it has often been denounced as undemocratic, which remains the core issue in the reform process. While we welcome the relative decline in the use of the veto and urge its further reduction, there is no assurance that it will never be used. On the contrary, the insistence on this right, or even the threat of its use, as witnessed recently, has led to the marginalization of the Council's role in the maintenance of international peace and security. Hence, there is a near-unanimous desire to progressively curtail and restrict the use of veto to situations falling under Chapter VII of the Charter, pending its abolition. In the interim, and to encourage the more responsible exercise of the veto, the proposal by Germany to explain the reasoning behind the use of the veto merits our support.

It is widely acknowledged that substantive progress has been achieved on the working methods of the Security Council, and provisional agreement has been reached on a number of other issues. There is, for instance, greater receptivity to requests by Members for information and participation in informal consultations. There have been improvements with regard to the practice of holding meetings with troop-contributing countries and with regard to the convening of more formal meetings. However, we recognize the need for greater openness and transparency in the Council. Open meetings of the Council should therefore become the rule and informal consultations the exception, as questions relating to international peace and security are, indeed, the collective responsibility of all Member States.

One of the fundamental issues still pending is the institutionalization of the changes that have already been implemented and their incorporation into the provisional rules of procedure, which as noted by many Member States, have continued to be provisional for more than five decades.

As far as periodic review is concerned, there is a cardinal principle whereby international organizations such as the United Nations cannot remain static against a backdrop of rapid change and transition in the global arena and the growing aspirations of the international community. Consequently, periodic reassessment has become a common denominator for various agencies and bodies. This is particularly essential for political organs such as the Security Council because their credibility and authoritativeness depend, to a large degree, on their adaptability.

Finally, my delegation believes that our approach should be to intensify our efforts to achieve a comprehensive reform of the Security Council in all its aspects, as stipulated by the Millennium Declaration. The dawn of a new millennium should provide the impetus and opportunity to reach agreement on a final package of reforms. Accordingly, we look forward to the convergence of views among United Nations Member States on the question of equitable representation on and increase in the membership of the Security Council and related matters. It is our hope that comprehensive reform of the Security Council will make it truly democratic, transparent, representative and effective in the maintenance of international peace and security in the twenty-first century.

In conclusion, my delegation extends its best wishes to you, Mr. President, in successfully discharging your weighty responsibilities as Chairman of the Working Group. We remain confident that under

your wise guidance, our deliberations will lead to substantive results. We pledge our full cooperation to efforts to achieve this objective.

Mr. Pamir (Turkey): We are discussing a matter that has particular significance for our individual and collective roles and our standing as United Nations Members. Under the Charter of the United Nations, its Members — sovereign equals — confer on the Security Council primary responsibility for the maintenance of international peace and security. The Council, in carrying out its duties, acts on their behalf. It is therefore totally legitimate for us to make our voices heard more effectively through the Security Council. The expansion and changing nature of the role of the United Nations in making and maintaining peace has only increased our interest in the comprehensive reform of the Security Council in all its aspects, as affirmed in the Millennium Declaration.

For the past seven years — that is, since the establishment of the Open-ended Working Group — Turkey has ardently stood up for Security Council reform during the deliberations of the Working Group as well as in discussions in the General Assembly. Turkey's motives as a proponent of reform are simple and clear: all Members of the United Nations have the inherent right to ascertain that the Security Council is, indeed, their common asset. This means transparency and accountability in its functioning; decision-making that is not guided by privileges; and more frequent opportunity for all to serve on the Council. Are these not also the aspirations of the overwhelming majority?

For the seventh year running, the Working Group has been dragged into a sterile discussion because of the attempts to make even the partial realization of these legitimate goals conditional on bestowing on a few countries new permanent-member status.

Similarly, progress on improving the working methods of the Council is excruciatingly slow, as the permanent members of the Council, together with a few other, are unwilling to move far enough to make the Council truly transparent and accountable. This is because such a reform is likely to result in the significant curtailment of their rights as members of an exclusive club.

To be fair, though, we also acknowledge the modest steps taken by the Council itself in the course of the past few years to make its work and meetings more accessible to non-members. Yet again, these are no alternative to a comprehensive revision of the Council's functioning.

Likewise, the veto is a central and cross-cutting element in our entire discussions of comprehensive Security Council reform. It is the major power that the permanent members can wield and is the invisible contour within which the Council shapes its actions. Yet whenever the Working Group turns to the issue of the curtailment of the use of veto, it is met with a deafening silence on the part of the permanent members.

Yes, our Working Group has not so glorious a past. But who is stalling progress, and why? Evidently there is no broad agreement on adding new permanent seats to the Council for individual States. But there is a general expectation of having a more democratic and representative Security Council. This will be within our grasp once we all discover that no decision-blocking strings can be attached to the increase in the non-permanent membership. It is important that this fact is also supported by the Non-Aligned Movement position. And we agree that the developing countries should be given wider representation in the Council. This is a legitimate requirement which should be treated on its own merits and not as a prospective outcome to be extracted from a bargain that will include giving trophies to some in the northern hemisphere. As has been our common understanding all along, that hemisphere's requirement for additional seats will be duly taken into account in the context of the respective regional groups. These groups will subsequently play their role, independent from one another, in the allocation arrangements for these seats.

We wish the Open-ended Working Group success in its proceedings during the fifty-fifth session of the General Assembly.

Mr. Kpotsra (Togo) (*spoke in French*): First and foremost, I would like to express my gratitude to the Open-ended Working Group on the Question of Equitable Representation on and Increase in the Membership of the Security Council and Other Matters related to the Security Council. I would also like to thank especially Mr. Theo-Ben Gurirab, Chairman of the Working Group, and the two Vice-Chairmen, the Permanent Representatives of Sweden and Sri Lanka, for their efforts throughout the year, leading to the adoption of the report currently under discussion.

Although seven years have already passed since the beginning of the Working Group's discussions on the question of the reform of the Security Council, we are far from achieving consensus on the various aspects of the issue. Indeed, this past year the Working Group's discussions seemed to have stagnated, since — unlike in years past — the Working Group was not able to reach agreement on any of the general observations that it considered.

Nonetheless, the process must continue and the Member States must commit themselves to seek — patiently, but with determination — the elements that can lead to general understanding and agreement on all the issues relating to the reform of the Security Council, which remains at the core of the efforts to modernize the United Nations.

In this connection, we can be pleased with the noteworthy progress made on the issues under cluster II. The observations formulated by the Working Group on cluster II issues have had a positive impact on the working methods of the Security Council. Thus, it can be observed that for the past two years — following the provisional agreement that the Working Group was able to reach, in which it proposed that as a general rule the Security Council should hold open meetings in which all Member States could participate — the number of open meetings held by the Security Council has continued to grow.

We can also welcome the concrete information on the Council's discussions that is provided daily. We should also welcome the positive contribution of the monthly assessment of the work of the Council that the Council presidency prepares for delegations.

Furthermore, it is clear that the marked trend towards enhancing the transparency of the Council's work has encouraged the participation of more Member States in discussions of important issues before the Council. This trend certainly played a decisive role in the historic United Nations efforts in East Timor and contributed to helping the Organization better grasp the problems of the African continent.

The injection of increasing doses of transparency into the working methods of the Security Council — largely inspired by the Working Group's discussions — should not lead to self-satisfaction. Coordination between the Member States and the Security Council has clearly been improved, and visible progress has been made in several areas, in particular as concerns the holding of open meetings. Nonetheless, we must continue to improve the working methods and the decision-making process of the Council so that they are more open and more effective.

The evolution of international relations over recent years, along with the legitimate aspiration of many States or groups of States to take part in the management of world affairs, calls for us to try to achieve a comprehensive reform of the Security Council, if that body is to play fully the role assigned to it under the Charter of the United Nations: to take primary responsibility for the maintenance of international peace and security. However, although this view is shared by the majority of Member States, there remain differences of opinion on most of the issues under cluster I, and the progress on these issues has been very slow.

Indeed, significant differences of opinion continue to persist as regards in particular the type or types of members that might be admitted to an enlarged Security Council, the number of members on such a Council and the areas in which the veto might be exercised. As regards the increase in the number of members of the Security Council, Member States face the reality that some of the permanent members of the Council categorically reject the concept of expanding the Council beyond 20 or 21 members. These permanent members argue that a greater expansion than that would affect the efficacy of the Council. Thus, there exists quite a substantial obstacle to the normal conduct of discussions on the issue of enlarging the Security Council.

Given the deadlock that work on this issue has reached, it is worth emphasizing that commitment to the process of reforming the Council implies that all Member States — and the largest States in particular — accept that this process should be considered from the perspective that the composition of the Council does not reflect the realities of the contemporary world, and that, in the end, the reform must lead to the establishment of a more representative and more democratic Security Council. It is absolutely necessary, as a number of heads of State and Government observed during the Millennium Summit in the Millennium Declaration,

> "To intensify our efforts to achieve a comprehensive reform of the Security Council in

all its aspects." (*resolution 55/2, United Nations Millennium Declaration, para. 30*)

However, this undertaking can succeed only if those wishing for tailor-made reform are ready to accept that the changes which have taken place since 1945 confer on other States and other regions the legitimate right to be represented in the Council and to participate effectively in the management of world affairs, particularly in decision-making relating to the maintenance of international peace and security.

This was aptly recalled by President Eyadema, current Chairman of the Organization of African Unity (OAU), when he said that the African continent — although it has 53 of the 189 Member States of the United Nations and although roughly two thirds of the deliberations in the Security Council affect it — is, like other regions of the developing world, under-represented in this vital organ of the United Nations. It would be fair to allocate it at least two permanent seats and five non-permanent seats in an expanded Council, in accordance with the decisions of the heads of State and Government of the pan-African Organization at its Thirty-third Summit in Harare in 1997.

Another important area of divergence is the question of the right of veto, which is at the core of Security Council reform. The right of veto, as has been frequently emphasized, directly compromises the function of the Security Council. The need to limit this anachronistic provision is more evident than ever today, as we can see from certain recent crises, such as the renewed violence on the West Bank and in Gaza, thus deadlocking the Middle East peace process. Although proposals have been made on how to limit the exercise and scope of the right of veto, the permanent members of the Council still persist in their opposition to any limitation of this right. This is what comes out of a text of a letter (S/1999/996), dated 23 September 1999 in which the five permanent members state that any attempt to restrict or curtail their veto rights would not be conducive to the reform process.

The rules were defined even before the substantive debate was begun, and even before an attempt to reach consensus on the issue. The argument that since the end of the cold war recourse to the right of veto has been rare, and that therefore it is no longer a threat to the Council's harmonious functioning, cannot justify keeping it, since those who possess it are prepared to use it on occasion to protect their own interests.

These fundamental aspects regarding Security Council reform hardly seem to lead to optimism regarding the current exercise. However, we need to keep in mind that, due to its highly sensitive nature, Security Council reform is certainly a lengthy endeavour. It is important, above all, to seek the most appropriate measures to make significant progress, taking into account the views of the majority of Member States. We hope that the commitments made by the heads of State and Government during the Millennium Summit will inspire the Working Group's next debate.

Mr. Arias (Spain) (*spoke in Spanish*): The recent Millennium Summit emphasized once again the importance of Security Council reform. It has often been mentioned that 150 delegates reaffirmed its importance. Spain was one of them. It is obvious that there is practically unanimity among Member States that Security Council reform is essential. The unanimity ends, however, when we go into the specifics of reform.

There is wide agreement about the need for the Security Council's working methods to become more transparent. Similarly, there is a general understanding that the decision-making process in the Council, including the veto, should be made more democratic. Moreover, no Member State denies the need to increase the number of seats in the Security Council, to make it more representative, in particular as regards the developing countries. Many of us think that a truly democratic enlargement, in line with the principles of the United Nations Charter and, among other things, the principle of the sovereign equality of States, and with the spirit of the times, can be accomplished only with an increase in the number of non-permanent members, most probably elected.

Nevertheless, we are aware that some Member States are lukewarm about the need for full transparency in the Council's working methods. There is also a small minority that does not wish to touch the veto. We also know that some Member States keep insisting on the establishment of new permanent seats, a proposal for which there is no general agreement.

On the other hand, we have listened often in recent times to certain countries, which present themselves as the sole champions of reform, saying

that there is a natural majority, also called the "silent majority", in favour of reforming the Security Council in the way they understand, while a minority is blocking progress towards that reform. Such a statement is fallacious, for at least three reasons. First, as I mentioned at the beginning of my statement, all United Nations Member States — and I emphasize "all" — are in favour of Security Council reform. My country is as much for reform as any of them. Reform is not the monopoly of a few; we do not need lessons in reform.

Secondly, if there is a majority as regards Security Council reform, it is composed of those of us who defend the view that the Security Council should be more transparent, democratic, representative and accountable. In short, we want change for the better.

Thirdly, the issue of reform is too essential to be simplified into a game of majorities versus minorities. As the President of the Government of Spain reiterated here, effective, democratic and fair reform will be possible only with consensus on every aspect.

This explains the fundamental importance of the Assembly's Open-ended Working Group on Security Council reform. Spain supports the Group as being useful and necessary, for at least three reasons.

First, the greater transparency achieved in the Security Council's working methods is the result of efforts made by many delegations in the Working Group. If today we welcome the fact that the Security Council is holding more public meetings, or that more briefings for all interested non-members regularly follow closed informal consultations, this is mainly due to the negotiations undertaken in the framework of the so-called Cluster 2 issues in the Working Group. However, much remains to be done.

Secondly, we are, unfortunately, far from reaching general agreement on expansion of the Security Council. Consequently, the discussions must continue, because we must not forget that Security Council reform is a comprehensive issue, as enshrined in the Millennium Declaration, which calls for

> "comprehensive reform of the Security Council in all its aspects". (*resolution 55/2, United Nations Millennium Declaration, para. 30*)

The Working Group is the only existing forum in which to achieve that comprehensive reform. Some foes of the Working Group are tempted to impose partial reforms. Today, we decide on the categories for enlargement; tomorrow we decide the total number of seats in the expanded Security Council; the day after we decide the privileges of new members; and later still, we decide who is in and who is out. The Working Group is an obstacle and a nuisance to that particular concept of reform. However, this is not the kind of reform that our highest representatives agreed to on 8 September.

Third is the thorny question of the veto. Currently, the Working Group on reform is the only forum of this Organization in which we can discuss this matter. The issue of the veto is of capital importance. It is a straightforward issue: a clear majority of States wishes to eliminate or reduce the scope of this obsolete tool of power. I would recall that President Chávez Frías of Venezuela also referred in his statement to the Millennium Summit to the need to do away with the vote. Even so, we know that this wish is somewhat illusory, since those who have the veto are not likely to renounce it, even partially. We also know that the condition of permanent membership is intrinsically linked to the power of veto.

Bearing this in mind, we must ask ourselves an obvious question: Are we ready to grant this huge, potentially paralysing power, to a new handful of States just because we enjoy excellent relations with them? Are we aware of the significance in the year 2000, 55 years after the last World War, of increasing the number of permanent members on the basis of dubious criteria and of granting them this all-embracing prerogative that could weaken any resolution?

In the year 2000, this is going too far. The veto is a crucial element of the reform and, in particular, of the enlargement of the Security Council. In the twenty-first century, when Member States are in an uproar over the issue of curtailing the current veto power, it would seem strange, to say the least, that we would grant it to a new group of countries. Apart from acting paradoxically, we would be establishing a new class of privileged States and thus doing a disservice to the United Nations.

In conclusion, my delegation considers that competence in the issue of Security Council reform lies exclusively with the Member States.

Mr. Kittikhoun (Lao People's Democratic Republic) (*spoke in French*): The world in which we

live is far from being safe or peaceful. We need solid bases and foundations to guarantee peace and to promote the social and economic development of all the countries of the world. In this respect, it is essential that the United Nations be reformed to function properly, fulfil its role and achieve its objectives.

Indeed, it is here at the United Nations that, in conformity with the principle of the sovereign equality of States, all countries enjoy equal status. It is also here at the United Nations that we advocate the principles of the non-resort to the use or threat of use of force against the independence and sovereignty of States, the peaceful settlement of disputes and non-interference in the internal affairs of other States. We believe that a strong United Nations, representative and truly democratic, would benefit from the support and, above all, the confidence of all its Member States, the poorest and most disadvantaged included.

As to United Nations reform, we cannot fail to mention the sensitive work under way in the Open-ended Working Group on Security Council reform. For more than seven years, we have considered the various aspects of the restructuring of the Security Council, the principal organ for the maintenance of international peace and security. Our delegation regrets that the objective of achieving a comprehensive agreement on the sensitive issues of the expansion, composition and working methods of the Security Council has yet to be reached. However, we should not give in to discouragement. Security Council reform represents a fundamental element of the overall reform of our Organization and remains one of the most difficult and complex of exercises.

Our position on this issue is known and has been stated on several occasions here in the General Assembly, as well as in the Open-ended Working Group. Our Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs, Mr. Lengsavad, in his statement at the Millennium Summit in September, also broadly reiterated it. We are in favour of an increase in both the permanent and non-permanent categories of membership of the Security Council. With respect to the new permanent members, given current international realities, we feel that two might come from industrialized countries and three from developing countries. In our view, this formula, although not yet supported by everyone, could nevertheless constitute a basis for discussion in our work in the years to come.

As to the increase in the number of non-permanent members, the idea that Asia, Africa, Latin America and the Caribbean and Eastern Europe should each have a representative on the new, expanded Security Council is interesting to us. Of course, this formula, like many others, warrants an even deeper consideration.

In the task of Security Council reform, we, like other members of the Non-Aligned Movement, favour transparency in the working methods of the Security Council. For us, transparency in the Council's working methods, especially in its decision-making process, would allow us all to understand the bases of decisions made by the Council and would help the Council itself to win the confidence of all the States Members of the Organization.

As we are all aware, the issue of the reform of the Council is not simple. We need to be patient, to continue to discuss and, above all, to benefit from the dynamism which has been created, so that we are able together to achieve the ultimate goal of the restructuring of the Council by conferring upon it more transparency, legitimacy and, especially, credibility.

Mr. Powles (New Zealand): For many of us this is one of the key debates of the General Assembly. I am delighted that the list of speakers is a lengthy one, as indeed it was last year and the year before that. The following remarks are complementary to those which will be made later by the Permanent Representative of Papua New Guinea on behalf of the members of the Pacific Islands Forum represented in New York.

The issue of Security Council reform was prominent during the Millennium Summit where, as others have reminded us, our leaders resolved to intensify their efforts to achieve a comprehensive reform of the Council in all its aspects. Many Foreign Ministers, including my own, the Honourable Phil Goff, addressed the subject in their statements in the general debate.

The question has to be asked, with all this interest and activity at the highest political levels, why is it taking so long to achieve a reform package that meets with the general agreement of which resolution 48/26 speaks? General agreement, something less than consensus but more than a two-thirds majority, in fact already exists on many key facets of the issue. There is general agreement on the need to improve the Council's working methods to make it more transparent

and accountable; general agreement exists on the need to enlarge the Council to make it more representative and, following Ambassador Holbrooke's statement on his country's position in the Open-ended Working Group in April this year, there appears to be greater flexibility on the question of overall size. Most of us also believe we have achieved general agreement on the need to curtail the veto, if it cannot be eliminated, in order to make the Council more democratic. This was graphically demonstrated, perhaps, by the acclamation which greeted the summary of the Chair of the Third Round table on this point at the end of the Millennium Summit.

It is New Zealand's firm view that everything hinges on what can be done about the veto power. This conclusion is by no means new or original; it has been recently stated far more eloquently by the Group of ten countries — (Australia, Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, the Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Ireland, Portugal and Slovenia — in a paper they contributed to the Open-ended Working Group on 25 June 1998 which can be found in document A/52/47, Annex XVI. The Group of Ten said:

> "General agreement on a comprehensive reform package is unlikely to be achieved without an understanding of the future scope and application of the veto".

They went on to say:

> "Given concerns of Member States about the current scope and application of the veto, agreement on its possible extension to new permanent members may depend on the willingness of the existing permanent members to accept restrictions on its use."

We soon heard what the permanent members thought of that idea when they declared here in New York at Foreign Minister level on 23 September last year that any attempt to restrict or curtail their veto rights would not be conducive to the reform process.

Throughout the deliberations of the Open-ended Working Group the five permanent members have consistently refused to engage in any meaningful way on the question of the veto. We are not among those who would seek to point the finger at any particular group for blocking reform, but this situation clearly needs to be addressed with determination if there is to be any progress towards the comprehensive reform mandated by our leaders in the Declaration of the Millennium Summit.

For most of us, we are not here to see the veto proliferated. We are here, in light of the historic opportunity offered by the reform process, to do our best to wind it back. As our Minister of Foreign Affairs and Trade, stated in the general debate, curtailment of the veto, if indeed it cannot be eliminated, must, in New Zealand's, view be at the heart of any reform. This anachronistic and anti-democratic power, which was foisted on the membership in 1945, has done considerable harm to our Organization — witness, most recently, the impasse in the Council over Kosovo in March 1999. Statistics advanced by the five permanent members on the rarity of its formal use these days are misleading; we all know the veto hovers ever-present above the Council's informal consultations; it is exercised by the raising of an eyebrow, a turn of phrase or studied indifference on the part of those delegations who possess it towards proposals from those who do not.

At the present time there is clearly no general agreement in support of a slate of new permanent members or what additional powers might be extended to them. New Zealand for its part has expressed support for Japan's aspirations, but it cannot contemplate any extension of the veto. Let us imagine for argument's sake how the Security Council might look if five new veto-toting permanent members were added, as some seem to seriously propose. The five permanents members would become ten. And what of the elected members, those who every two years pass the test of their peers' good opinion? Why, even if they were increased by five or six they would become increasingly irrelevant, given the well-known dynamics of the Council. In a short time only a very few countries capable of meeting the criteria in Article 23 of the Charter, which includes a willingness to put one's citizens in harm's way in the service of the United Nations and the cause of peace, would bother seeking election. If there is a sure-fire way to harm our Organization, which is uniquely founded on the principle of the sovereign equality of all its Members, then certainly it is to expand and further entrench an unaccountable minority holding the veto power.

As for the notion that some kind of periodic review might help impose accountability, this, in our view, is a chimera. As is abundantly evident today, once a Member State has the veto power there is no

going back. Article 108 of the Charter of course specifies that any amendments require the ratification of all the permanent members.

The issues that come under this item and are dealt with by the Open-ended Working Group are plainly highly sensitive. They go to the heart of national perceptions of self-worth, place in the geopolitical pecking-order or sense of entitlement. The Open-ended Working Group is uniquely mandated and equipped to deal with them. For whatever eventual outcome on reform is reached, it must be sustainable and it must enjoy the widest support, indeed the general agreement of the membership. Anything less would risk doing severe damage to the Organization. That is why the Open-ended Working Group's transparency and open-endedness — any Member State can come and speak, no one is excluded — is so critically important. As my Minister also said in the general debate, Council: reform is too important a matter for back-room deals.

The Working Group has withstood the slights of those who seek short-cuts and quick-fixes, all bound to end in despair, and will continue to do so under your guidance. The Working Group and those active participants in it who have served recently as elected members of the Council have also contributed substantially to improving the working methods and decision-making of the Council. The Working Group has not least served as a real-time forum for drawing attention to some of the more serious deficiencies in the Council's working methods and decision-making as they have occurred. For these achievements alone it has proved its worth to Member States.

The task before this fifty-fifth session remains considerable, but the broad outline of a reform package is, as I have suggested, discernible where the lines of general agreement intersect. There are other possible elements, such as a reconfiguration of the anachronistic regional groups, which might allow for new, smaller, more homogeneous groupings having common interests to coordinate more effectively than happens at present on who should represent them on the Council — subject, of course, to the General Assembly's ultimate endorsement. The key missing ingredient, however, is political will, including greater readiness on the part of those who have virtually untrammelled power within the Organization to negotiate with the rest of the membership on the veto power. We suggest it is on this score that leadership is now urgently required.

Mr. Wang Yingfan (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): First of all, allow me to congratulate you, Sir, on your assumption of the chairmanship of the Open-ended Working Group on the reform of the Security Council. I wish also to take this opportunity to express our gratitude to your predecessor, Mr. Theo-Ben Gurirab, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Namibia and President of the fifty-fourth session of the General Assembly, and to Ambassador de Saram of Sri Lanka and Ambassador Dahlgren of Sweden for guiding the work of the Group at the previous session of the General Assembly.

The Chinese delegation has always maintained that an appropriate expansion of the membership of the Security Council and an improvement in its working methods would allow the Council better to exercise its primary responsibility for the maintenance of international peace and security, as conferred on it by the Charter. An overriding priority in the reform of the Council is therefore to address the issue of the under-representation of the developing countries on the basis of the principle of equitable geographical representation. This common understanding has also been reached by the Open-ended Working Group after years of hard work.

In the United Nations Millennium Declaration, States explicitly expressed the wish to see efforts stepped up to reform all aspects of the Security Council. We must therefore tackle this task with a sense of urgency, and our work in this area should have a more specific focus. It is our hope that under your leadership, Sir, the Open-ended Working Group on the reform of the Security Council will, at this session of the General Assembly, redouble its efforts and quicken its pace in addressing the core issues of enhancing the representation on the Council of the developing countries, on which broad agreement has already been achieved.

The reform of the Security Council bears on the vital interests of every Member State and is pivotal to the future of the United Nations. We should not, and cannot, turn a blind eye to differences on this issue. The only right solution is to be found in full discussions, in a spirit of solidarity and cooperation, among all Member States, with a view to achieving consensus and enabling the outcome of the reform to represent the collective will of all Member States.

We should continue to review the issue of Security Council reform and the mechanism of the

Working Group in a spirit of cooperation, openness and transparency.

One important aspect of reform of the Security Council is to improve its working methods and enhance the transparency of its work. In this regard, over the past several years Council members have made a strong and sustained effort to exchange views with all United Nations Member States, soliciting advice and opinions from all sides. In our view, it is of vital importance to the efficiency and effectiveness of the Security Council to strengthen communication and consultations between Council members and non-Council members, including consultations with troop-contributing countries and the countries and regional organizations concerned.

At the same time, we believe that the working methods of the Security Council should be improved on a step-by-step basis, and that openness and transparency should be increased only insofar as they enhance its efficiency.

The Chinese delegation is prepared to continue to work together with all other Member States to contribute to improving the working methods of the Security Council.

Mr. Heinbecker (Canada) (*spoke in French*): Canada would like to approach the debate on this important agenda item from a new perspective because it comes virtually at the end of our two-year mandate in the Security Council. This experience has taught us a lot about the Council, in terms of both theory and practice. Above all, it has enabled us to reach certain conclusions with regard to the reform of the Security Council.

I should like to speak to three points today.

First, progress has indeed been made with regard to the reform of the Council's working methods, but more can and must be done, particularly as regards working with troop-contributing countries. Secondly, the functioning of the Council is seriously impaired by the right of veto when it is used as a deterrent. Reform is necessary and possible. Thirdly, we need to enlarge the Council so that it will better represent today's world, but only through the election of members for limited terms.

(*spoke in English*)

We are aware that some among us here today are critical of the Open-ended Working Group. We are not completely satisfied with the Group either. We are certain, nonetheless, that it has had a positive impact and remains the appropriate locus to discuss the reform of this Organization.

In our view, the single most important development in the Security Council over the past 12 months or so has been the reform of the working methods of the Council itself. After years of urging by the Open-ended Working Group and others that the Security Council reverse the trend of meeting increasingly behind closed doors, significant progress has been made. Over the last 22 months Canada has advocated the need to develop a culture of transparency and accessibility to the Council. Our efforts and those of so many others in this Hall have to a large extent borne fruit. It is appropriate that I note explicitly in this regard that these reforms would not have been possible without the strong and active engagement of certain permanent members and the ready acceptance of these reforms by all of them.

A range of Council business is now being discussed in public — from Secretariat briefings to open debates to interactive discussions and special meetings with important visitors, as we had last week with Chairman Arafat of the Palestinian National Authority. This week's Security Council calendar, which indicates that five out of seven meetings will take place publicly, is evidence of the progress made. The Council is now welcoming representatives of Member States in the Council Chamber itself, as provided for by the Charter and the Council's provisional rules of procedure, and not, as former Argentine Permanent Representative Petrella so aptly put it, "in the dungeons" of the Conference Building.

At the same time we, Canada, readily acknowledge that judicious recourse to private meetings remains necessary. It allows the Council an intermediate course that balances the sensitive nature of an issue under discussion and the need to respect the right of participation of Member States in accordance with the Charter. Still, more progress is required, and it is becoming urgent. We agree with those delegations that have argued that participation under Articles 31 and 32 of the Charter means more than simple attendance. If the Council decides that the question brought before it specially affects the interests of

specific members, those members must be allowed to speak. Attendance is no substitute for participation.

The Council's working methods must be improved even more. Perhaps the most pressing and far-reaching reforms are necessary with respect to peacekeeping missions and cooperation with troop-contributing countries. Last month's meeting of the Council with troop contributors to the United Nations Mission in Sierra Leone (UNAMSIL) was an important step in the right direction. Current approaches remain, nonetheless, inadequate. We need to rethink quite fundamentally how peace missions are conceived and how they are provided with political and military guidance. Troop-contributing countries must have confidence both in the process and in its product. They will have that confidence only when we find a way of ensuring that they participate fully in discussions and decisions germane to the missions in question.

We need also to devise a means to afford troop contributors access to the Secretariat as missions are planned, as well as access to the information and intelligence available to the Secretariat as missions unfold. And all of this should be a matter of course, of right and sound governance, and not of privilege. The objective is to work together to understand the causes of a conflict and what we intend to achieve by employing military force. Then we need to reach a common understanding of the circumstances a mission faces, and to give it the political and military direction and support it needs in order to succeed on behalf of us all.

Our next observation on the work of the Council is more worrisome. We have been struck and disappointed by the tendency towards a two-tiered Security Council. The permanent members are prepared to, and too often do, act collectively and exclusively. Last fall, when the East Timor crisis boiled over, the Indonesian Foreign Minister came to New York and first met with the P5, and then only afterwards with the full Council. During a briefing on the Sierra Leone crisis in May this year, minutes after insisting that options for Council action not yet be discussed, the Secretariat hosted a meeting on the thirty-eighth floor of the Secretariat building to which only five members of the Council were invited. The subject? Options for Council action. Again, on the Iraq Compensation Commission, a month ago, the P5 met and agreed among themselves on a course of action. There are other examples. One wonders which of us among the elected members is regarded as so politically powerful, intellectually dominant or rhetorically persuasive that even the P5 cannot risk closed meetings with us.

In fact, a good argument could be made that if there are any members of the Council with special responsibilities it is the elected members of the Council, who have mandates from the voters of this institution to act on their behalf.

The point of this preamble is that the Council needs to be reformed comprehensively, and in three distinct but related ways: first, to promote a more democratic and accountable character for the Council; secondly, to enhance Council effectiveness in ways that maximize the ability of non-members to follow and inform Security Council activities; and, thirdly, to curtail progressively the use of the veto, an instrument that colours and limits far too much of the Council's deliberations.

As regards the size of the Council, we feel it is imperative that enlargement be in the non-permanent category only, and for limited terms. We believe it is beneficial that new members of the Security Council stand for election and subject themselves to the politics, demands and discipline inherent in campaigning. There are two ways by which we could achieve such a vision.

First, we would ask the permanent members of the Council to work with us in developing a comprehensive reform, even knowing that that necessarily entails a progressive curtailment of the use of the veto. It is anachronistic that an Organization with such an impressive and important record in assisting countries to develop their own democratic institutions should accept that an exception should be made for 5 of 189 countries in its own governance. We would argue that reform of the use of the veto is also in the long-term interests of the permanent members. They, even more than the rest of us, have an interest in preventing the sure and steady decline in the authority of the Council that recourse to that anachronism entails.

Secondly, we should no longer regard the Open-ended Working Group as a forum for a handful of members to insist that we accord them the privilege of individual permanent seats on the Council as well. Permanent is a long time. None of us can know what the future holds. As well, adding vetoes would only

make the Council more sclerotic. It would be the diplomatic equivalent of pouring cement into the United Nations motor. The veto, or the threat of the veto, is omnipresent. Five vetoes already impair the good functioning of the Council. How would adding five more vetoes help? And whom would it help? The Organization is, after all, according to Article 2 of the Charter, "based on ... the sovereign equality of all its members."

It is time for reform of the Council, without doubt. But that reform will only really be reform if those who aspire to the privilege of permanent membership, and those who were accorded it in a time long past, work with the rest of us to develop a new, democratic, representative and accountable Council.

(*spoke in French*)

I propose that we use the next session of the Open-ended Working Group to work towards a Security Council with more efficient working methods, fair and reasonable decision-making, and an enlargement process that reflects the diversity of membership of the United Nations and is consistent with the principles of the Organization. The time has come to place our collective needs before narrow national interests.

The President: As members are aware, the list of speakers for the debate on this item was closed this morning. However, there were 111 Member States inscribed to speak on it, and we have heard only 29 speakers. In order to be able to exhaust the list of speakers on this item by tomorrow afternoon, and since the Department of General Assembly Affairs and Conference Services has provided us with interpreters for an extended period this evening, I intend to continue this meeting until 9 p.m.

Mr. Valdez Carrillo (Peru) (*spoke in Spanish*): Allow me first to express the gratitude of my delegation to Ambassadors Hans Dahlgren and John de Saram, Vice-Chairmen of the Open-ended Working Group, for their efforts and their dedication to this item during the last session.

During the Millennium Summit, held in September 2000, heads of State or Government decided by consensus to intensify their efforts to achieve a comprehensive reform of the Security Council in all its aspects. That is consistent with our common objective of making the United Nations a more effective instrument for the maintenance of international peace and security.

The Peruvian delegation considers that the dialogue on this issue should encompass the Council's size, its decision-making process and the question of transparency. This should include the question of the veto and the role of the General Assembly in the new context. A wish to strengthen the Council's effectiveness and transparency must not overshadow the genuine concern that the Council be truly representative so that the membership at large can place greater trust in the delegation of authority to the Security Council. In that connection, the desired objectives cannot be achieved solely by an increase in the number of members; even if we effected such an increase immediately, the lack of trust would remain. Here, the political will of the permanent members is crucial.

On the matter of transparency, Peru is pleased with the admittedly insufficient effort to open up the Council's proceedings through the holding of a large number of public meetings. We hope that this trend will continue and that the practice will be extended in the future so that the views of States Members of the United Nations on matters of common interest will be not only expressed, but also reflected in the Council's decisions.

Similarly, Peru was pleased at the debate prompted by the report (A/55/305) of the Panel on United Nations Peace Operations convened by the Secretary-General and chaired by Mr. Lakhdar Brahimi. That ongoing debate has helped create a political climate propitious for the consideration of concrete measures in a variety of areas. The Council has already analysed its jurisdiction in the matter and in that connection adopted its resolution 1327 (2000).

Here, my delegation stresses the importance of improving the procedures for consultations among troop-contributing countries, the Secretary-General and the Security Council. We wish also to note that the competence of the Council and its members is based on a Charter mandate to which they must respond in a serious and responsible manner. They must act in conformity with the Charter and without impinging on the jurisdiction of other principal organs, first and foremost the General Assembly, the Organization's universal and most democratic forum.

Peru is further convinced that the role and effectiveness of the General Assembly must be

strengthened so that it may regain its proper role as the supreme body in the management and resolution of matters over which it has legitimate and direct jurisdiction, especially those related to international peace and security, as stipulated in Article 11 of the Charter. It must shoulder its responsibility in defining the collective security framework in situations of internal conflict — with which the Security Council was not intended to deal. The General Assembly must exercise its jurisdiction principally in cases involving decisions with universal applicability.

The General Assembly is capable not only of consideration, reflection and recommendation on such matters; its role is an increasingly visible and necessary one. There is no better negotiating forum for framing the new concepts later to be applied by the Security Council and for reaching consensus agreement on them. That is why it is essential that we reflect also on the new role that the General Assembly would have with an expanded and reformed Security Council. Any strengthening of the Security Council that avoids weakening the General Assembly and that sets out clear criteria for action and a linkage between the two organs would restore the principles of democratic participation that should involve trust in the delegation of power to the members of the Security Council.

My delegation has on previous occasions stated its guiding principle concerning the nature of Security Council reform. Let me reaffirm them now. In order to guarantee the Council's representative nature and legitimacy, both categories of membership should be expanded, including both developing and developed countries. As to the exact number of members on a new, expanded Council, Peru considers that the current ratio of permanent to non-permanent members should be retained. We support a process of regular review of the membership of the Council, including the permanent membership, to reflect changes on the international scene.

Should there be no agreement on an increase in the number of permanent members, my delegation shares the position favouring an expansion of at least the non-permanent membership. My delegation views the right of veto as an exception to the principle of sovereign equality that has been justified and accepted for 55 years because of the need for effectiveness in the maintenance of international peace. But we consider that it is anti-democratic and that its use or the threat of its use is partisan. It must be eliminated; until that is achieved, its use must be strictly restricted to Council action under Chapter VII of the Charter.

My delegation would like to say something about this year's sessions of the Working Group. We are concerned at the reduced level of participation by delegations, and at the sense of stagnation and fatigue that was noted at certain stages in the proceedings. That resulted in a lack of progress on key items in cluster I. On many items there were arguments that threatened to hinder and delay the already lengthy and repetitive debate. This does not contribute to the overall objective of broad Security Council reform with a view to bolstering its legitimacy, transparency and efficiency. We appeal to all countries to join in serious, responsible negotiations covering all the elements to which I have referred. The consensus adoption of resolution 53/30 once again proves that, with realism, flexibility and political will, we can make progress. That is the spirit in which we should now work towards the general agreement we desire on comprehensive reform of the Security Council and on a better relationship between the Council and the General Assembly.

Mr. Sun (Republic of Korea): I take this opportunity to pay tribute to the President of the General Assembly at its fifty-fourth session, His Excellency Mr. Theo-Ben Gurirab, who served as Chairman of the Open-ended Working Group on the Question of Equitable Representation on and Increase in the Membership of the Security Council and Other Matters related to the Security Council, and to the two Vice-Chairmen, Ambassador John de Saram of Sri Lanka and Ambassador Hans Dahlgren of Sweden, for their excellent leadership in guiding the Working Group over the past year. My delegation expresses its high expectation, Mr. President, that the coming year's sessions of the Working Group will be even more productive and constructive under your outstanding leadership.

During the Millennium Summit, heads of State or Government reaffirmed their faith in the United Nations as an indispensable foundation of a more peaceful, prosperous and just world. They categorically stressed that it was a priority task to strengthen the entire United Nations system to enable it to function more effectively and more authoritatively in the new century.

Security Council reform, among other matters, deserves to be treated as a most crucial component of overall United Nations reform, a process that will make the United Nations a more relevant and competent organization for today and for tomorrow. Some argue that the pace of our discussion of Security Council reform is slow. I would agree that our discussion is difficult and at times even frustrating, and that we have yet to produce a conclusive plan for a future Council.

However, the difficulty we have faced in reaching a conclusion on the reform of the Council is the result of the immense importance and implications attached to this issue. The reform of the Security Council is very comprehensive, as confirmed by the Millennium Declaration. It reflects current reality and encompasses all aspects regarding the structure of the Council and the purposes and the principles of the Charter, as well as the emerging new principles guiding the action of the entire membership.

Moreover, this complex subject is interconnected with and has implications for other important issues regarding the overall reform of the Organization, such as the strengthening of peacekeeping operations, the readjustment of the financial structure and the upgrading of the United Nations role in economic and social development. It is important to note the reality that a growing number of Member States are playing an increasingly active role in the work of the United Nations and more States are invited to do so.

The support and contribution of many countries other than the permanent members have become indispensable to promoting global peace and security. The structure and working methods of the Security Council, however, remain largely unchanged. Currently, only a few countries are given a significant role to play. It is clear to us that the path that must be chosen for this Organization is that of openness and inclusiveness. While we agreed to act on the basis of a shared responsibility, we believe that such responsibility must be accompanied by shared opportunities. Evidently, there is no one simple solution to this process. Our efforts in reforming the Council should therefore proceed from the basics and produce a comprehensive conclusion.

We are of the view that the reform of the Council in its shape and decision-making process should be guided by democratic principles and reflect current reality. It is the view of the overwhelming majority of the membership that the present system of veto rights should be changed. The Republic of Korea has held the view that genuine progress on the enlargement issue will not be achieved without resolving the question of veto rights. Any belief in a quick and partial solution is likely to mislead us in our efforts to achieve the objectives of the reform.

As far as the working methods of the Council are concerned, there have been a number of significant positive developments during the past years. In our view, this was possible because the general membership and members serving the Council have recognized the requirements of the new reality and have made efforts based on democratic principles. My delegation appreciates the efforts of all Council members throughout past years to enhance consultations with non-members, and expects further progress in achieving a more participatory and transparent process.

Even though a number of ideas on the size of the Council have been proposed, there have not been enough discussions to determine which country or countries would be eligible to become new permanent members or on what basis and according to what criteria. My delegation believes that further discussion on criteria will help us come up with more desirable and realistic solutions regarding the shape of the Council. The new structure of the Council should be more democratic and representative, and, at the same time, more competent and effective. We are of the view that allowing more seats to be regularly elected for limited terms is a viable option to be considered, given the purpose of the reform and the current reality.

It is my delegation's firm belief that reform of the Council, like any other, should be carried out in such a manner as to unite the membership of the United Nations, instead of dividing it. Nevertheless, the issue of increasing the number of permanent members and the issue of veto rights have been a major source of division among the Member States. Such division should be avoided. We ought to seek a common denominator reflecting reality and guiding principles that will serve the unity of the whole membership.

Mr. Mra (Myanmar): When our heads of State and Government gathered in early September this year at the historic Millennium Summit, they decided to make every effort to make our Organization a more

effective instrument for pursuing all the priorities we have set for ourselves to pursue in the new millennium.

The effective reform of the Security Council has been recognized as one of the most important areas in this regard. It is the strong feeling of my delegation that as long as we continue to have a deadlock in this vital undertaking, our present and future efforts for the emergence of a more effective United Nations will be viewed as less than satisfactory. We see comprehensive reform of the Council as the essential element of the reform of the Organization, for our success in the reform of the Council will be tantamount to the genuine democratization of the United Nations. Such a fundamental change will have a very decisive ripple effect on all our efforts in all the priority areas, leading to more trust in all that the United Nations stands for. We are therefore very much encouraged that you, Mr. President, have been able to convene a debate on this question. We notice that the number of participants in the debate has already indicated the importance Members continue to attach to the question. We hope that by the end of the debate we will have been able to identify areas where more progress is possible and that our discussion will have the needed impetus.

Mr. Andino Salazar (El Salvador), Vice-President, took the Chair.

Our deliberations in the last several years have been aimed at reaching general agreement on all aspects of the reform of the Security Council. It is a well known fact that, in all these years, we have spared no effort in achieving the avowed aim of general agreement. There has been no dearth of proposals and initiatives either. The progress we have made in the consideration of the working methods of the Security Council is a clear indication that there has existed all along some strong will in our endeavours for reform of the Council. At the same time, the fact that we have not been able to reach general agreement on a final package also indicates that we still lack the necessary political will. The formidable challenge confronting us, therefore, is how to generate the necessary political will.

I want to make a few observations on certain key aspects of the question under debate. Owing to the complexities of the issues involved and their profound implications for the future, our discussions have not resulted in the attainment of our ultimate aim of a final package. It is my delegation's belief that, after over seven years of discussion on this important question, arriving at another impasse at the end of another round of consultations in the Working Group next year would have a devastating effect on the credibility of the United Nations, which is already hanging in the balance because of continued impasses on core aspects of the question. In view of the universal agreement that now exists on the need to reform the Security Council in all its aspects, it is also our belief that fresh attempts during the forthcoming discussions in the Working Group to narrow our differences on core issues — to the extent that that is feasible — will be in the interests of the Organization.

That course of action would entail focusing attention on core issues, such as the total size of the enlarged Security Council and the expansion of its membership, rather than on an across-the-board discussion of all aspects of the reform of the Council. In view of the clear linkage between the agreed total size and the distribution among regions of new permanent members, attempts should be made to explore ways and means by which the existing entrenched positions on the total size of the enlarged Council could be accommodated. Such attempts would certainly require a show of flexibility by all concerned, without undermining the principle, which appears to be generally agreed, that the Council should be expanded in both categories of membership: permanent and non-permanent. Although Myanmar continues to favour the enlargement of the Council up to 26 members, at this stage of our discussions we feel strongly that we should seek ways of arriving at a realistic size by considering the eight current options without too much compromise to existing positions on these questions.

The question of expansion is another important aspect that deserves our priority attention in the forthcoming discussions of the Working Group. Although its latest report (A/55/47), records various positions on this question, it is undeniable that there has been a convergence of views on the idea of enlarging the Security Council in both the permanent and non-permanent membership. Although there are certain views to the contrary, this is an almost overwhelming position. Similarly, the majority of countries appear to agree that the new members of the Council should come from both developed and developing countries. It is our view that, in the interests of progress, our discussions in the Working Group should be directed towards establishing general

agreement on such areas where our views converge. Ways should be explored of initiating negotiations so that what we call the credible progress we have made so far will not be wasted in the absence of a general agreement on a final package.

Before concluding, I would like to take this opportunity to reiterate our position on the question of the veto. Although we continue to believe that the veto is unjust and anachronistic, and that its elimination should be our ultimate aim, we are ready to subscribe to the view that the rights and privileges of the current members should be extended to new members, which we will be entrusting with heavy responsibilities.

After so many years of intensive discussion on the reform of the Council and various initiatives by all interested countries, it is high time for us to set priorities in the discussion again. We cannot afford to waste our valuable time, energy and efforts which have been invested in achieving success in the reform of the Council. We are aware that we have not reached a stage at which we could start negotiations on the final package. However, this does not mean that we cannot negotiate on certain aspects of the question where agreement is possible. Although incremental, those will be steps in the right direction, and there is always the possibility of eventually integrating the incremental agreements into the final package.

Mr. Samhan (United Arab Emirates) (*spoke in Arabic*): I should like at the outset to express our gratitude to the Chairman of the Open-ended Working Group and to his two Vice-Chairmen for their tireless efforts aimed at reaching conciliatory solutions to strengthen the role of the Security Council in the maintenance of international peace and security.

Despite the extensive deliberations of the Working Group since its inception in 1993, the initiatives and proposals advanced during the debate on this item, and the agreement of many delegations on a number of procedural matters relating to the Council's working methods, the proposals reflect a clear divergence of views and positions on the part of the Member States. This is particularly the case with regard to an increase in the membership of the Council, changes in its working methods and the actions that must be taken to regulate the use of the veto power, in addition to issues relating to transparency in the decision-making process. All these considerations have impeded the attainment of an equitable, just and balanced agreement that is easy to implement and that can thereby bring about fundamental and positive reforms of the Security Council commensurate with its growing role in international relations.

The proposals advanced by the Non-Aligned Movement in the Working Group clearly reflect the policy orientations and positions in the Millennium Declaration on the need to strengthen the role of the United Nations — more specifically, the Security Council — by making its working methods more transparent, just and balanced, taking into account the large increase in the membership of the United Nations. That growth necessitates an increase in both the permanent and non-permanent membership of the Security Council to enhance stability in international relations and to maintain international peace and security.

Consequently, reform of the Security Council and an increase in both permanent and non-permanent categories of membership have become very important, given recent political and security developments and the challenges of our contemporary world. The Security Council must also increase its consultation and coordination with concerned Member States and regional organizations.

We also call for the allocation of a permanent seat to the Arab States on the basis of the principles of rotation and coordination within the Asian and African groups, in a manner that secures their equitable geographical representation and increases their effectiveness in contributing to regional and international peace and security.

The United Arab Emirates reiterates that it welcomes the positive measures and practices adopted by the Security Council during the past few years to improve its methods of work, in particular the holding of public meetings, which enable countries to express their political viewpoints and concerns regarding agenda items under consideration. This is especially important with respect to certain items that have been on the Council's agenda for a long time, such as the question of Palestine and the situation in the Middle East, as well as some African problems and other issues that are the result of the double-standard policies pursued by certain countries that enjoy permanent membership in the Council — policies that have led to the situation we are witnessing today in the occupied Arab and Palestinian territories, such as the acts of

genocide that the Government of Israel is perpetrating against unarmed Palestinian civilians, in complete contravention of humanitarian law and norms and relevant Security Council resolutions.

While we wish to express our concern at the bias shown by some permanent members and their continued use of double standards, we call, as a priority, for a serious, objective and comprehensive periodic review of the work of the Council in order to institutionalize its procedures, make clear the nature of the challenges it is facing and rationalize the use of the right to veto.

In this respect, we wish also to underscore the importance of coordination between the Security Council, the General Assembly and regional organizations, given the importance of such actions in the containment of disputes and conflicts that have grave consequences for humanity.

In conclusion, we hope that our deliberations on this item will contribute to achieving a greater and more constructive international understanding, which will enable a comprehensive reform of the Security Council, an equitable increase in its membership and the improvement of its methods of work in a manner that will guarantee its effective discharge of its increasing responsibility for the maintenance of regional and international peace and security.

Mr. Kafando (Burkina Faso) (*spoke in French*): The debate on the democratization of the United Nations, especially regarding equitable representation on the Security Council, is as old as the Organization itself. However, in the past seven years this question has been considered intensively and from a completely new perspective.

We know that in San Francisco in 1945, at the time of the birth of this institution, discussions had already begun regarding the size of the Council's membership, with small and medium-sized nations insisting that it be sizeable, contrary to the wishes of the major Powers, which wanted a more limited organ.

The views of the larger and smaller countries were very divergent also as concerns the right of veto. With some minor differences, those same views are held today. In other words, the reform of the Security Council remains a pressing issue.

But while everyone is in agreement regarding this vital necessity, which was recalled by our heads of State and Government during the Millennium Summit, not all share the same opinion as to how to achieve it. It would seem that instead of helping us move towards reform, the debate is getting bogged down and becoming centred around the influential Member States, which want their preponderance — be it presumed or proven — and the high level of their financial contributions to the United Nations — in other words, their weight — to serve as a benchmark in the framework of any attempt to reform the Security Council. For this reason, it has often been said that the Security Council is the most aristocratic of organs.

My delegation believes that this reform of the Security Council should not be effected on the basis of power or of a weighing of ambitions, but should, rather, be seen as an attempt to respond to humankind's expectations and aspirations.

The power to decide on such serious questions as the imposition of sanctions, intervention in the internal affairs of a sovereign state or the use of force requires not only impartiality but, above all, legitimate institutions. Only a Security Council that is fully representative — that is to say, democratic — and that enjoys unanimously recognized and accepted credibility can be in a position to impose rules and decisions governing the maintenance and defence of international peace and security.

As one would imagine, my country's position parallels that of Africa. As aptly mentioned this afternoon by the Ambassador of Togo, the representative of the current Chairman of the Organization of African Unity. Our 53-State continent, in order to maintain a sense of realism, justice and equity, which are among its intrinsic values, and in order to take into account the requirements of democracy, refuses to adopt a maximalist position. In the context of the expansion of the Security Council, our continent is asking for at least two permanent and two non-permanent seats, in accordance with the instructions given by African officials at the highest level.

I have spoken of Africa, but it goes without saying that the expansion should also benefit other continents, and in this respect we share the view that regional groups should have the right to speak about the future distribution of seats in the Security Council, with a view to avoiding frustration and misunderstandings. My delegation is convinced that if

we wish truly to make progress in the consideration of this question, we need first of all to accept and integrate the criteria of equity and equality, representation, democracy and non-discrimination, and subsequently demonstrate political will, especially on the part of the current permanent members.

As long as they do not seriously reconsider their position by moving away from what they consider their birthright and a royal prerogative, no progress can be achieved.

As to the substance, we share the idea of those who maintain that this reform should reflect the geopolitical configuration of the post-cold war days. Our differences appear only regarding the time period when they add that this reform will only be enforced gradually in due time and according to the manner in which States interact. With such an argument, it is probable that the restructure of the Security Council might never be achieved.

If there is one requirement for our era, just like the rule of law and respect for human rights, it is reform of the Security Council, whose inconsistencies and weaknesses are exposed by each new international crisis.

I wish to conclude by expressing the wish and hope that throughout this fifty-fifth session the work of the Open-ended Working Group on reform of the Security Council will make significant progress, so that this troublesome question will find a just solution within a short time. Thus, we will have successfully met the challenge and, above all, we will have rendered a considerable service to humanity.

Mr. Méndez (Venezuela) (*spoke in Spanish*): Changes seen on the international scene have emphasized the need to adapt the United Nations to the requirements of our time through the introduction of necessary improvements in its structure, giving it the appropriate means and resources so that it can deal completely with the delicate responsibilities that it has in the area of peace and international security in an international system in constant flux. On the basis of this reality, it is important to act in order to ensure and strengthen leadership of the Organization as a point of meeting for international dialogue and cooperation.

In this process of renovation and change facing the Organization, the reform of the Security Council constitutes, without any doubt, an unavoidable and urgent objective that concerns all Member States. From this perspective, and animated by the spirit of the Millennium Declaration, we feel that efforts should be redoubled with regard to the reform of the Security Council in order to ensure its credibility as a democratic, transparent and impartial body in which no country has the right to paralyse action agreed by the majority through the exercise of the veto. Recourse to this should be abolished, in consonance with the principle of sovereign equality of nations.

In the same way, we welcome the application of forms of broader participation of States in harmony with the practice of democracy, and we feel that this approach should also be stressed at the international level, particularly within this Organization, where it is essential to bring about a complete reform of the Security Council. This would enable us to reflect in its structure and composition the changes that have taken place on the world political scene.

Although some people may feel that the Working Group is at a dead end after seven years of activity without agreement, we nonetheless feel that it is important to muster forces in a spirit of flexibility in order to make the necessary advances in the Working Group with a view to finding a solution dealing with all aspects linked to the reform of the Security Council, such as enlargement, the question of the veto and the improvements in that body's working methods. In the search for a comprehensive solution, we should take into account the principle of sovereign equality and the right of Member States to an undeniable representativity in the bodies of limited composition, such as the Security Council. Given the importance and sensitivity of these matters, it will require that the discussions of the Working Group be carried out in an environment free of pressure, avoiding the imposition of artificial deadlines, which could hinder a general agreement. The nature of the changes planned necessarily requires transparency, cooperation and flexibility on all parts.

Finally, the reform of the Council should ensure that Member States can feel that their positions have been taken into account and their rights respected, and that they are supported and promoted, along with the collective interests of the international community, in an objective and balanced way.

The Working Group has made significant progress in certain areas, particularly in Cluster 2,

relating to the improvement of the working methods and an increase in the transparency of the Council. However, discussions held show that there are still significant differences with regard to the number of members in a possible expanded Security Council, and also differences with regard to the question of the veto. The activities carried out by the Working Group show that a reform of the Security Council is something that is of concern to everybody, and we can therefore not be happy with fragmented or partial solutions that depart from the spirit and intention of resolution 48/26, which is to look for a general agreement.

To conclude, we would like to praise the role of the co-Vice-Chairmen of the Working Group, Ambassadors John de Saram of Sri Lanka and Hans Dahlgren of Sweden, who conducted the work of the Group with great responsibility and dedication during the fifty-fourth session of the General Assembly. We also harbour the hope that under their leadership we will be able to make progress in the Working Group in the search for indispensable consensus. We can assure you, Mr. President, that we will cooperate constructively in this delicate responsibility that Member States have conferred in you.

Mr. Monteiro (Portugal): This debate is taking place after a thorough discussion of matters concerning the reform of the Security Council in past years. It also takes place after the Millennium Summit, where our heads of State and Government expressed their commitment to intensify their efforts to achieve a comprehensive reform of the Council in all its aspects.

With many elements for reform identified, and the reaffirmation of political will, it is now time to build a solution.

During previous sessions, in particular after the establishment of the Open-ended Working Group in 1993, much has been discussed. An impressive number of proposals has been put forward, as demonstrated by the documents prepared by the Bureau this year. The issues have been discussed and rediscussed time and time again in the Working Group. The main elements of reform are now clearly on the table.

There is considerable support today for enlargement in both categories. This is also clear from the large number of references to it by delegations favouring this particular aspect in the course of the general debate of the current session of the General Assembly. Portugal has always supported an expansion of the Security Council in both categories. Only in this way can the Council respond adequately to the current needs of the international community, which, as is widely recognized, has changed considerably since the adoption of the Charter in 1945.

The expansion of the Security Council has to take into consideration — pursuant to resolution 48/26, which sets the framework of its reform — the need to remedy the existing misrepresentation of the developing countries and the changes that have occurred in international relations. If we want to address all these questions, we cannot do so adequately by enlarging the Council in one category only. We have to envisage balancing and reflecting all these aspects in both categories. To increase only the number of non-permanent members would increase the imbalance in the composition of the Council and among members and categories of members.

We have also seen overwhelming support for the reform of the veto power. While the veto has been used very moderately lately, the very fact of its existence continues to be present in every aspect of the Council's decision-making process. Either by promoting weak decisions, watered down by the need to find a compromise acceptable to the permanent members, or by imposing immobility on the Security Council, the hidden veto can often be more negative than the expressed veto. Indeed, while managing, through the mere threat of veto, to block or restrict Council action, permanent members need not expose themselves to public opinion and the general membership of the United Nations. Manipulating through the threat of veto, they simply do not have to express or explain a negative vote in a public meeting of the Security Council.

Portugal, together with other countries — the so-called Group of 10 — has submitted a number of very concrete proposals with regard to the restriction of the use of veto that remain valid, realistic and worth considering. We hope that we will be able to find the same necessary flexibility in the consideration of this matter that we have shown this year with regard to the acceptable number of members of an enlarged Security Council.

Portugal also supports the establishment of a periodic review that would provide a re-examination by the General Assembly of the decisions taken in all aspects of the reform of the Council. We support this

mechanism because it will enable the Security Council to adjust periodically to the needs of the international community and the United Nations. At the same time, it will increase substantially the accountability of the Council as well as the responsibility of its members, in particular the new permanent members, before the General Assembly, to which they all have to answer.

Concerning the cluster II issues, much has already been achieved in the Open-ended Working Group. One cannot deny the influence that this work has had in promoting change in the Council's current methods of work. We consider that a clear improvement has taken place lately in this area, reflected in a Security Council more open to the general membership. We welcome these developments. A solution can be found on this matter, too, if there is will and flexibility. The task concerning the methods of work of the Security Council is, by definition, never concluded. The new composition of the Council will determine adjustments, with the necessary repercussions in its methods of work. However, the principles of transparency and participation that we are discussing in the Working Group will continue always to apply.

As I said at the beginning of my intervention, it is now time to build a solution. Portugal is ready to play its part in this effort to reach a solution that earns the general support of the membership. All those who favour reform of the Security Council must show a reasonable flexibility in the negotiations to avoid the rule of consensus's paving the way to a new form of veto in the decision-making process within the General Assembly. The Secretary-General reminded us eloquently in his opening intervention at this year's general debate that:

> "Consensus is highly desirable, but need not mean waiting for absolute unanimity on every sub-clause among 189 Member States. The minority, often a very small minority, should not withhold its consent unreasonably ... We can no longer afford to operate always at the level of the lowest, and slowest, common denominator." (*A/55/PV.10, p. 2*)

Let us now work to honour the commitment expressed in the Millennium Declaration by our heads of State and Government.

Mr. Aboulgheit (Egypt) (*spoke in Arabic*): For the eighth year in a row, the General Assembly is dealing with the question of the expansion and reform of the Security Council. It is evident that these past few years have allowed the Member States, as individuals and groups, to formulate and present their positions clearly on numerous occasions, be it within the framework of the general debates of past sessions or within the framework of the Open-ended Working Group on the Question of Equitable Representation on and Increase in the Membership of the Security Council and Other Matters Related to the Security Council.

Thus, at this stage, Egypt cannot but re-emphasize some elements and frameworks of its established positions, as represented in the positions of the Non-Aligned Movement. Egypt has the honour to chair the Movement's working group concerned with this matter. Our position also emerges from the African position, which was adopted at the Harare summit in 1997. Details of these positions have been recorded in numerous documents, including the Non-Aligned Movement position papers presented from 1995 to 1997, as well as in statements and declarations of the Movement, the latest of which was that issued in Durban, South Africa, in 1998. The African position was clearly reflected in the Harare declaration of 1997. All these papers have been made available as official documents of the United Nations and annexed to the reports of the Working Group that have been adopted by the General Assembly over the past few years.

Egypt has submitted many ideas in this connection that we consider to be constructive. We intend to pursue our participation in the ongoing dialogue with a view to reaching a comprehensive and equitable package for the expansion and reform of the Council. In the light of all this, the delegation of Egypt will confine itself in this statement to making some general observations.

First, the report of the Working Group for the fifty-fourth session contains some general comments and elements that would be useful to consider before the Group resumes its work at this session. Foremost among these is recognition of the fact that a number of fundamental differences remain and that positions are still far apart as regards the expansion of the Security Council, including the category or categories to be covered by the expansion.

It is important for Member States to seriously discuss the different scenarios concerning expansion

and try to ascertain whether they really lead to the attainment of the desired objectives and are in keeping with the purposes that we seek to achieve through expansion and the principles that we seek to follow. We wish to mention these purposes in detail, because they concern principles that we are seek to establish and consolidate.

We seek to establish a Council more capable of carrying out its responsibilities in accordance with the Charter, a Council more representative of the Member States, a Council more democratic and transparent in its methods of work, as well as more responsive to the challenges of maintaining international peace and security. In order to attain these purposes, we have to be committed to a number of principles, foremost being those of equitable geographical distribution and equal sovereignty among States — principles already adopted by the Non-Aligned Movement. We also have to pay special attention to increasing the efficiency of the Council's working methods in order to increase its ability to respond to the growing challenges in the maintenance of international peace and security.

We realize that these purposes and principles may not be comprehensive, but we believe that they represent the minimum requirements in accordance with the Charter and with resolution 48/26, by which the Working Group was established and which was adopted by consensus. We also realize that the proposed methods might require some time for discussion and analysis. We look forward with an open mind to taking part in the discussions on relevant proposals.

Last year's report of the Working Group stressed that the expansion of the Council and reform of its working methods, including the decision-making process, should be considered as integrated elements of a common package. This idea was emphasized in the Millennium Declaration, which says that reform of the Security Council should be comprehensive and cover all aspects. The report also stressed that it was not possible to deal with the expansion of the Security Council without considering the question of the veto. These two points emphasize the need to settle the question of restricting and curtailing the use of the veto, which are opposed by the five permanent members alone, in the face of the position of all other Member States. This question has to be settled before we can arrive at any solution for the expansion and reform of the Council.

In this context, it is possible to explore new ideas and proposals, such as allowing the General Assembly to play a greater role in reviewing the use of the veto by permanent members. It must be remembered that the Security Council, in accordance with the Charter, carries out its function of maintaining a collective security system on behalf of all Member States. However, currently the right of veto is not being exercised in keeping with its main purpose and its use or the threat of its use has meant that individual political interests are often placed above the interests of international order. This dangerous practice has led to the creation of a privileged elite which is using the veto in a manner that disregards the position of the majority of countries. Consequently, the Council cannot be said to be following democratic practices, nor is it possible to claim that its practices represent the general interest of the Organization and its Member States. There is no need to remind the Assembly of the numerous examples that have led, and continue to lead, to a marginalization of the Council's role as a direct result of the use of the veto power, thereby obstructing decision-making in the Council and preventing its ability to work in a democratic or transparent manner.

The question of reforming the working methods of the Council and increasing its transparency is by no means less important. At the moment it is even more important than the question of increasing its membership.

The last report of the Working Group accurately reflected progress achieved in discussing this important topic. Some recent practices of the Security Council, such as holding some private and public sessions, reflect the increasing awareness — though still not adequate — of the importance of increasing transparency in its work. We hope that this will contribute to further development in the working methods of the Council and encourage all Member States to settle important issues still pending regarding reform of its methods of work, as outlined in the Working Group's last report.

In conclusion, I would like once again to reassure the President of the readiness of the delegation of Egypt to fully cooperate with him and the Vice-Presidents of the Working Group within the framework of the General Assembly's continuous follow-up on the question of expansion and reform of the Security Council, in an attempt to arrive at a Security Council

more representative and more democratic and respecting the guiding principles for this process.

Mr. Vento (Italy): We are at the beginning of the eighth year of debate on Security Council reform. In some areas messages are encouraging, while in others they are disappointing. Our exercise continues to be held hostage to individual interests.

At the same time, a certain fatigue is setting in, making the idea of shortcuts or selective steps seem more attractive to some. But the final Declaration of the Millennium Summit of heads of State or Government rejected these temptations, stating without ambiguity the objective of a comprehensive reform in all its aspects. The paramount objective of the reform is, and must remain, to make the Council more representative, democratic, transparent and accountable.

There are two key substantial aspects of the reform: how to make the decision-making of the Security Council more effective and accountable, and how to make its composition more representative. Effectiveness has to be found in more transparent working methods and in more timely and accountable decision-making. All too often, behind the closed doors of the informal consultations, the taking of prompt and urgent decisions is obstructed by the threat of the veto or by the culture of the double standard. No reform proposal can sidestep the issue of the veto.

This leads to the crucial political issue of accountability. The general membership exercises democratic control over the non-permanent members through the elections in the General Assembly. But how can we assess the accountability of the permanent members? It is time for a true debate on the primary responsibility that, according to Article 24 of the Charter, is conferred upon the Security Council to act on behalf of the Member States as a whole.

For example, during the General Assembly's recent examination of the Security Council's annual report, the point was made that these responsibilities cannot be only financial. The interests at stake in the Council's decisions are primarily of a political and security nature. There is no link, therefore, between permanent membership and contributions to the regular or the peacekeeping budget.

The Council's current composition is imbalanced and at odds with the criterion of equitable geographical representation. It is time to bring it into line with today's world. We are far from a general agreement in favour of an increase in individual permanent members. In truth, there is no such category as permanent membership, as defined by objective general criteria. All we have is the historical reality of five individual countries. We have learned to live with this reality, but it should never be repeated.

Moreover, since 1945 both the decolonization process and the end of the cold war have led to the emergence of about 110 new Member States out of changes in the geopolitical realities of some permanent members. Yet there has been no corresponding change in the powers and the privileges of the permanent five.

The reform process cannot be linked to the ambitions of a handful of Member States aiming for national interests rather than for global cohesion, otherwise reform would be within our grasp. Expanding the Security Council means guaranteeing better representation for the new countries that were not members of the United Nations at its birth. The regional groups are the institutional expression of this reality. Just as they play a decisive role in choosing elected members today, they should play a decisive role in identifying new members of the Council, whatever their qualifications or attributes. This is the most innovative message to emerge from the interactive debate of the Millennium Summit.

The only practical solution in the short term appears to be an increase in non-permanent seats. Nevertheless, we are not averse to other solutions. It is essential, however, that we not create a Security Council à la carte by devising not just two but even three, four or five different categories of membership. We should thus explore the idea of regional rotation that the African countries have proposed for their own regional group. Perhaps this principle should be extended to all the other regional groups of the United Nations, in accordance with the principle of equality.

In recent years the United Nations has opened up to the contribution of civil society. The Non-Governmental Organization (NGO) Millennium Forum, held here in New York last May, clearly called for the democratization of the Security Council, with an increase in the number of non-permanent seats and the curtailment of the veto power. We cannot draw on the

contribution of civil society in a selective manner, ignoring it when it expresses a strong and independent view.

The Open-ended Working Group has been roundly criticized for its mode of operation. However, its slow progress is due not to its working methods but to deep divergences between Member States on questions of substance. To achieve an effective reform, we should stop pointing to majorities or minorities. In any case, on the question of the veto the minority is clearly represented by those holding it, and on the question of expansion the minority is represented by the five or six aspirants to individual permanent seats.

The Open-ended Working Group must continue its efforts, but it must work better. We must not be afraid of an open and effective exchange on even the most delicate of issues. The lack of response to important proposals and the ideas raised during our May and June sessions, for example, showed that some delegations were not prepared to engage in a constructive process aimed, for instance, at identifying the legal criteria for permanent membership or at limiting the use of the veto. The opposition of the same delegations is one of the reasons why the annual report of the Working Group contained no general observations.

I conclude, Mr. President, with a quote from one of your predecessors, the Foreign Minister of Uruguay, Didier Opertti. In his speech before the General Assembly last September, he argued that the formula of an increase in the number of both permanent and non-permanent members does not reflect the universal spirit of the reform. He stated, therefore, that

> "we must explore alternative solutions avoiding the approaches — perhaps too simplistic — adopted so far, which have not made progress possible, even after eight years of intensive negotiations. New approaches and ideas are needed in the reform of the Council more than in any other problem." (*A/55/PV.21*)

Let us resolve to intensify our efforts in this direction.

Mr. Fonseca (Brazil): The call for renewed efforts to reform the Security Council was prominent in the statements made by our leaders during the Millennium Summit. We are encouraged to see that this call is echoed by the participation of more than 100 Member States in our debate today.

Let me repeat the basic tenets of Brazil's position on this issue. We believe that it is necessary that the Security Council be perceived as a body that enjoys unquestionable authority and legitimacy. For that, the Council must be made more accountable to the general membership; its methods of work must provide for greater transparency and participation by non-members of the Council; and its composition must be adapted in order to better reflect the increased membership of the Organization and the enhanced role of developing countries in world affairs.

Any reform package must therefore include enlargement of the Council's membership and improvement of its methods of work. We commend the practice recently introduced by the Council to have an increasing number of open and private meetings, as opposed to closed and informal consultations, daily briefings by the President and wider circulation of monthly assessments. As is rightly pointed out in the Brahimi report (A/55/305), there is also an urgent need to improve the mechanisms of consultation between the Council and troop-contributing countries.

Reflecting a greater convergence of views, the Open-ended Working Group was able to make important progress in the consideration of Cluster 2 issues. Although much more needs to be achieved in terms of increased transparency and accountability, it is in the area of the Council's composition that we must concentrate our efforts in order to make comparable progress. Brazil favours an enlargement in the number of both permanent and non-permanent members of the Security Council, increasing the total number of members up to a figure in the mid-twenties. We also believe that equitable representation in the Security Council can be achieved only if new permanent seats are allocated both to industrialized and developing countries.

Brazil favours a curtailment of the veto, with a view to its gradual elimination. As a first step, the veto should be limited to decisions taken under Chapter VII of the Charter.

After seven years of efforts, there is a deep sense of frustration among the overwhelming majority of Member States over the slow pace of progress in our discussions on this issue, and in particular over the stalemate in the activities of the Open-ended Working

Group. It is now time to respond promptly to the call made by our leaders during the Millennium Summit and move the process forward.

As we look ahead to the resumption of the Working Group's activities, we cannot afford to engage in yet another round of general discussions. All reform issues have already been extensively discussed. We know what the positions are and where the main difficulties lie. At this point, it is possible to discern clearly what the majority of the Member States is willing to support. We should now start to prepare the ground for the political decisions involved.

In order to ensure more focused and productive work, the activities of the Working Group next year should benefit from further guidance from the General Assembly. Otherwise, we would just be repeating the same arguments, with no clear direction, and risking a decreasing interest of Member States in the meetings of the Working Group. We therefore encourage the President and the Vice-Chairmen to engage in broad consultations with the membership on the way to approach the resumption of the Working Group's activities.

We regret that in preparing its last report the Working Group was not able to reach consensus on a chapter of general observations about the work accomplished and the main difficulties that still remain. Nevertheless, we think that the draft general observations presented by the Vice-Chairmen, reproduced in annex XIII to the report, are very useful, as they give a clear assessment of the work done so far and carries the authority of the Bureau. We commend Ambassador Dahlgren of Sweden and Ambassador de Saram of Sri Lanka for this document and encourage the President to build upon it.

The Vice-Chairmen indicated clearly that there was a substantial body of support for expansion of the Security Council in both permanent and non-permanent members. We are convinced that there is also a substantial body of support for an increase in the membership of the Security Council to a total number in the mid-twenties, for the assignment of new permanent seats to both industrialized and developing countries and for a movement towards the gradual elimination of the veto.

We have rightly set a very high standard of a two-thirds majority for decisions pertaining to the reform of the Security Council. At a certain point, the General Assembly would have to take a decision on which proposals and ideas can meet that requirement. Only then would we be able to concentrate on those proposals, and more focused negotiations could take place in the Working Group and the General Assembly. This is also a point on which we encourage the President to consult broadly with the membership before the Working Group resumes its activities.

We believe that the Working Group should resort to concentrated sessions, preceded by intensive consultations conducted by the Bureau. These consultations could serve the purpose of orienting the President and the Vice-Chairmen in the preparation of documents and of specific proposals to be referred to the Working Group.

We are confident in the President's leadership and keen sense of diplomacy to move this complex process forward. We pledge our full cooperation to him and to the two Vice-Chairmen.

Mr. Kuindwa (Kenya): For the last seven years discussions on the reform of the Security Council have been extensive. We have arrived at several positions which must now be bridged. The Non-Aligned Movement and the African Group have made concrete proposals aimed at moving the process forward. In this we are not alone, but a solution remains elusive.

The principle of the sovereign equality of States continues to be one of the cardinal pillars of the United Nations. It is, however, recognized that sovereign equality is not absolute. The capabilities, responsibilities and obligations of States in their roles for the elimination of fear and want in the world differ. Still, nobody can deny the need for collective decision-making and concerted action, guided by the principles laid down in the United Nations Charter.

Nowhere is the fate of man better guarded than at the United Nations, especially under the mandate of the Security Council. The Council has the supreme obligation to safeguard and guarantee the survival of the human race. Being such an important organ, it must therefore be representative, democratic, impartial and accountable.

The institutions and instruments which were established in 1945 took into account the political, economic and security needs of the time. Since then, times have changed. For example, in 1945 Africa was rather insignificant in global affairs, with merely a

handful of independent States. Today, Africa has 53 States that are represented in the United Nations. This represents a significant 28 per cent, or nearly one third, of the total membership, yet the institutions and organs have not changed to accommodate this reality. This can be said of other regions as well. The need to make the United Nations truly universal, democratic and representative of the diverse interests which have emerged since its inception is dictated by the arrival of new forces. It is a product of the changed realities of our times, and it is long overdue.

In assessing the roles of the organs of the United Nations, Kenya has often called for the General Assembly to reassert its role within the Organization. Kenya has been at the fore in calling for equitable representation and an increase in the membership of the Security Council. President Daniel arap Moi, addressing the Millennium Summit, reiterated Kenya's position that Africa must have two permanent seats in the Security Council, on the same footing as existing permanent seats, which will be shared on a rotational basis.

The time has come for the General Assembly to engage in deeper and frank negotiations to narrow existing differences, and to finalize the matter. Progress so far has been very slow.

The Non-Aligned Movement and the African Group have made concrete proposals. There is no question about the need to expand the Security Council, taking into consideration Africa's needs as well as those of other regions that are currently under-represented.

It is said that necessity is the mother of invention. In the past, the world has witnessed differing responses by the United Nations to similar situations. Africa has not received its due attention. In Angola, Somalia, Rwanda, the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Sierra Leone, to name but a few, Africa received lukewarm and inadequate attention. In some instances, national tragedies could have been avoided if the international community had responded in a timely manner. Conversely, Iraq, Kosovo and East Timor received robust and meticulous attention. These confounding reactions have only helped to expose the inadequacies in the present organs and to underline the urgent need for reforms.

It is also noted that lack of transparency in the Security Council is a weakness which is in itself a threat to international peace and security. The reform proposals seek to strengthen the Security Council by making it more democratic, representative and transparent. The United Nations, with all its organs, should not be left behind in the wave of democratic reforms that is currently sweeping the entire world.

Way back in 1993, at the Organization of Africa Unity (OAU) Summit held in Cairo, Egypt, African heads of State and Government categorically called for the expansion of the Security Council. This position was reiterated and further amplified in 1997 in the Harare Declaration as well as at the Non-Aligned Movement Summit held in Durban in 1998. Kenya fully subscribes to the enlargement of the Security Council in both the permanent and non-permanent categories. We believe that under-represented regions, including Africa, Asia and Latin America, should receive permanent seats, with Africa having two permanent seats and five non-permanent seats. We also believe that the veto power should be progressively curtailed and eventually eliminated.

If we cannot quickly agree on these proposals, we at least owe it to posterity to make a start now. We cannot afford to continue burying our heads in the sand like indecisive ostriches. While debating the issue, we could, for example, agree now on increasing non-permanent membership as a starting point. This would give us a Council that is reflective of the principles of democracy, a Council that is transparent and one that espouses the virtues of fair play and the principle of the sovereign equality of all Members of the United Nations.

In conclusion, Kenya believes that the Security Council continues to play a crucial role in the maintenance of international peace and security. As we march into a new era in the new Millennium, we have the opportunity to make the necessary adjustments and changes to revitalize the dynamism of the Security Council by making it more democratic and representative of diverse interests. In this way, we shall enhance its effectiveness and legitimacy by reflecting the universal character of the United Nations membership.

With foresight and flexibility, we can bring to bear these vital changes. We owe it to ourselves and to future generations.

Mr. Galuška (Czech Republic): There is a simple reason why the Czech Republic takes the floor again

and again in our ongoing debates on expansion and reform of the Security Council. It is that our silence in such a debate could be seen as a sign of resignation, and this is not the case. Obviously, for the reform-minded country that I am honoured to represent, there is scope for frustration, given the amount of seemingly wasted efforts and stalemate of the last several years, but we are not giving up.

The reform of the Security Council is probably the most difficult and delicate task that we face, and it also remains our greatest challenge. Reform of the Security Council is, in our view, a key issue of the overall reform of the United Nations. As long as the Council — or a magistracy in our global village, as my colleague from Singapore put it a few weeks ago — fails to represent the membership of the United Nations in an adequate manner, and as long as it fails to enjoy the overwhelming confidence of Members, the reform of the United Nations will not be complete and the pursuit of its overall strengthening will once again end. This was recognized by our Heads of State, and that is why they incorporated in the Millennium Declaration a strong commitment to intensify our efforts to achieve a comprehensive reform of the Security Council in all its aspects.

Positions and aspirations of Member States with regard to Council reform are well known. So is the position of my country, and I can be very brief in reiterating it here.

In a nutshell, we firmly believe that the Security Council should be enlarged in both categories. Our choice would be five additional permanent seats and four to five additional non-permanent seats, including one for Eastern Europe. We respect the option of rotating permanent seats for specific regions, but no country or region should be forced into such a scheme.

As to the question of the veto, we continue to favour some reduction of areas where the veto can be applied, possibly through individual commitments by permanent members and other steps which do not necessarily require Charter amendments. In this regard, we continue to believe in the validity of proposals submitted by the Group of Ten in 1998, and as a member of the Group we are determined to take an active part in future deliberations on that subject.

In the area of Security Council working methods, we generally welcome and support any move towards greater openness and transparency. Some of the recent developments in this area, often thanks to initiatives of non-permanent members, are encouraging, and we would strongly appreciate it if similar movement continued. The list of newly elected non-permanent Council members this year seems to justify that expectation.

Having said that, I have to assure the Assembly that our views on reform are not frozen in time. We are flexible to some degree, and we are always pleased to see some flexibility from others. A very good example of increasing flexibility came last spring from the United States delegation concerning the number of seats in the enlarged Council. Let us hope that this signal will have a follow-up.

Indeed, it is most encouraging for all reform-minded countries to see flexibility among the permanent five on reform issues. I would stress that any sign of willingness to share their powers, privileges and responsibilities helps very much — probably more than anything else.

Finally, I invite the President to identify himself with the process of Council reform. We very much rely on him because his role in the process is irreplaceable. We also expect from him, as the designated Chairman of the Open-ended Working Group, strong leadership on reform issues, capturing and capitalizing on the momentum of the Millennium Summit. We have already noted with high appreciation his strong determination to move the reform forward. In this respect, he can count on our full and active support.

Mr. Amer (Libyan Arab Jamahiriya) (*spoke in Arabic*): The debate on this agenda item follows intensive negotiations this year in the Open-ended Working Group on Security Council reform. The intensive participation in the debate demonstrates once again the importance attached by Member States to this subject, since the restructuring of the United Nations and efforts to revitalize its organs will not be complete unless they include an overhaul of the Security Council.

Despite the frustration we feel because consideration of this subject has not achieved the desired progress and has not resulted in a consensus agreement, we remain hopeful that the Working Group will be able, at its forthcoming round of consultations, to overcome the difficulties that have impeded tangible progress in this regard and to fulfil the mandate set out in resolution 48/26: the restructuring and reform of the

Security Council to make its membership more representative and more democratic and to make the Council more transparent in its procedures and working methods.

Over the past five decades, the world has witnessed major changes and developments that made the reform of United Nations organs a necessity. The composition and structure of those organs, especially the Security Council, are not in keeping with new international realities.

Over the past seven years, intensive discussions have taken place on increasing the Council's membership. The reasons for the discussions have been anchored in many factors, including an increase in United Nations membership since the last increase in Security Council membership. With regard to the process, my delegation feels, as it has indicated on many past occasions, that an increase in Security Council membership should not exclude non-permanent members. There is no need for new permanent members that would perpetuate and strengthen discrimination against Member States. However, if there is a genuine need for an increase in the category of permanent members, then it must be impartially addressed.

If there is to be an increase in the number of permanent and non-permanent seats, their allocation must then be subject to the principle of equitable geographical distribution and must take into account the growing role of developing nations, which now constitute the overwhelming majority of the United Nations membership, as most of the issues before the Council primarily concern this group.

In this regard, the guidelines and proposals put forward by the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM) on increasing Security Council membership remain relevant, because they are based on the principles of full equality and sovereignty among States and equitable geographical distribution. Therefore, my delegation supports the NAM request to increase the Council membership to 26 seats. We also reaffirm our common African position that two permanent seats be assigned to Africa, to be occupied by rotation.

A mere change in the Security Council's composition would not be sufficient. The comprehensive reform process must be an integral part of an overall reform that will correct the existing imbalances in the Council's composition and will ensure its accountability to the General Assembly, where all Member States are on an equal footing.

The Working Group's report before us contains several proposals on achieving transparency in the Council's procedures and on making it more democratic in its decision-making process. Despite the Council's implementation of some proposals, that implementation remains limited and weak, because it is subject to discretionary power and has not been institutionalized. Therefore, it is very important that the Working Group's efforts be built on the reforms achieved. In that regard, we must ensure that procedures are developed to link the Security Council with other major United Nations organs, particularly the General Assembly, which is authorized by the Charter to consider general principles of international cooperation for the maintenance of international peace and security. Any such issues must be discussed here.

We are confident that practical and frequent cooperation between the two organs will open new vistas to further cooperation and to addressing pressing problems. This should also apply to another main organ, the International Court of Justice. The Security Council must not infringe upon the Court's jurisdiction. Any legal issues presented to the Council must be addressed exclusively by the Council.

Similarly, it has become necessary to consolidate the provisions of the Charter that deal with the relationship of the Security Council with non-member States, since our experience with the Council has shown that it continues to interpret Article 35 of the Charter selectively, contrary to the letter and spirit of the Charter. Thus, the Council has prevented some States from exercising their full rights under the Charter. Our impression is that the Council continues to deal with Member States in a discriminatory way. The Council holds consultations with troop-contributing States for peacekeeping operations, but it does not consult with other States on issues concerning them.

The Security Council's informal consultations remain the rule rather than the exception. Despite the fact that the Security Council has increased the number of open meetings recently, the discussions at that level are not meaningful and useful. Those meetings continue to be decided by a limited number of States. Many delegations share this concern, including some Council members, a fact that strengthens our hope that

the Working Group will establish correct rules for the Council's procedures, to ensure that the Council consults with the largest number of Member States possible, particularly those States whose interests are affected by issues being discussed by the Council. The Council should prepare its resolutions after listening to those States in open formal meetings despite obstacles posed by certain States to reaching consensus on these procedures, which should be institutionalized.

The President returned to the Chair.

We remain very hopeful that the will of the majority will prevail so the Security Council can work in a clear and democratic fashion that will enhance its credibility and legitimacy.

The question of reconsidering the issue of the veto is crucial to the process of reforming the Security Council. My country opposes the veto privilege because it contravenes the principles of the Charter and undermines the democratic system. The veto power has been exploited to serve narrow interests, despite the claims made in the arguments put forward to maintain this privilege. The countries that won the war in 1945 gave themselves certain privileges in accordance with certain criteria that they themselves set.

The United Nations today is different from what it was 50 years ago. The most important difference is that the overwhelming majority of Member States represented in this Assembly were not members of the United Nations 50 years ago, and had no say in giving that privilege to those five permanent members. We reaffirm what we have called for over the past quarter of a century: the privilege of the veto should be eliminated or, at least, restricted until it is ultimately abolished. In our view, the veto should not remain the privilege of a few countries that use it to consolidate their hegemony over the rest of the world and to control the decision-making process at the international level.

Greater efforts must be made to reform the Security Council and improve its working methods on the basis of equality, transparency and democracy, so as to secure the interests of all countries and ensure an outcome of which the overwhelming majority of the Member States approve.

While we look forward to the expeditious resolution of this question, we do not favour setting a deadline for ending discussions on this matter. We support the position of the Non-Aligned Movement that efforts aimed at restructuring the Security Council should not be subject to any pre-set time frame. It is essential that we reach a consensus before a final decision is taken on this point. We also renew our adherence to the Non-Aligned Movement position that any decision involving amending the Charter should be approved by a two-thirds majority of Member States, as indicated in Article 108 of the Charter.

I would like to reiterate our willingness to participate in future discussions on the reform of the Security Council so that it can be better aligned with the new international situation and respond more effectively to the aspirations of all Members of the United Nations.

Mr. Bøjer (Denmark): I have the honour to speak on behalf of the five Nordic countries: Finland, Iceland, Norway, Sweden and my own country, Denmark.

Less than three months ago, heads of State or Government gathered at the Millennium Summit here in New York. They met to reaffirm their commitment to the United Nations and its Charter and to give direction to the United Nations in the twenty-first century. They clearly stated that we should intensify our efforts to achieve comprehensive reform of the Security Council in all its aspects. This is a welcome indication of the political will that obligates us to proceed expeditiously.

The Nordic countries firmly support the view that the Security Council must be able to react swiftly and effectively to threats to international peace and security. The Council should be able to agree on early and appropriate action, throughout the spectrum of conflict management, from early warning, fact-finding and conflict prevention to launching new peacekeeping operations and, if necessary, taking action in accordance with Chapter VII. Effectiveness also means that the decisions of the Security Council must be respected, supported and complied with.

Over the years, the Nordic countries have participated actively in the deliberations and have from time to time submitted specific proposals on reform of the United Nations in general and the Security Council in particular. Today I will therefore limit myself to the following observations. When persistently pursuing Security Council reform, we must aim at the twin challenges of increasing the representativity of the

Council and, at the same time, further improving the efficiency of its decision-making, as well as its openness and transparency for the general United Nations membership on whose behalf the Council acts.

Greater representativity of the Council will require a balanced increase in its membership. As stated on several occasions, the Nordic countries favour an enlargement of the Security Council. The right, optimum figure hardly suggests itself, but the ultimate objective of the enlargement, and of reform more generally, is to render the Council more representative, which will also enhance the legitimacy of its actions. Reform should ensure that the global and regional perspectives of today are reflected in its decision-making process, in order that the Council may be perceived as being truly representative by the international community and that Member States may truly feel that the Council acts on their behalf.

Chief among the prerogatives conferred in 1945 upon permanent members by virtue of their status, is the right of veto. The use of the veto opens unique aspects of decision-making in the Security Council. Now, new methods are needed to deal with new problems. A new international situation has presented new opportunities for unity in the Security Council and for a truly cooperative approach to its decision-making. If, during a crisis requiring urgent action, the Security Council is paralysed by a veto or the threat thereof, this may undermine the authority and relevance of the Council and, indeed, of the entire United Nations. Necessary action by the Security Council should not be hindered by a veto.

The permanent members of the Security Council should limit the use of the veto, taking into account their unique responsibility for the interests of the United Nations as a whole. If they nonetheless choose to exercise the veto power, the permanent members should fully explain their reasons. The Nordic countries appreciate the declining trend in actual use of the veto during recent years. We would, however, like to see the permanent members agreeing among themselves to limit the use of the veto.

The Nordic countries welcome the fact that more of the Council's business now takes place in formal and open meetings. Transparency and openness have contributed to the acceptance and legitimacy of its decisions. The Council should be able to hear the views of all relevant parties to a conflict without political recognition being implied. The Nordic countries would like to see the Council engage further in broad consultations with non-members, not least troop-contributing countries, on matters concerning peace operations.

Some progress has indeed been made in the efforts to make the Security Council more transparent and to improve its working methods, not only in the Open-ended Working Group, but also by the Security Council itself; several Security Council Presidents have introduced commendably inventive and constructive steps. The Nordic countries will continue to work to improve transparency both from within and outside the Council.

For years, the Open-ended Working Group on Security Council reform has been a forum for efforts, at times frustrating efforts, towards narrowing differences of opinion. On paper, the results of the Group's deliberations over several years may seem meagre, yet some achievements have been registered, in owing large measure to exertions by the Bureau of the Working Group. Thus, the report of the Working Group contains not only a recommendation to the General Assembly to prolong the Group's mandate, but also some embryonic guidelines for further work. Similarly, a most useful compilation of various reform-related issues has been produced.

Complex and interlinked issues such as the size of an enlarged Security Council and the question of the veto must be tackled. To do this, the political will of Member States is needed. Some convergence has, in our view, taken place — to an extent, far broader than is suggested by the Group's most recent report. Thus, when the Group reconvenes next year, a basis upon which to build momentum will exist and should be fully utilized.

The Nordic countries would like also to reiterate their support for a review mechanism covering all the elements currently being debated. Such a mechanism could well be a key element of any overall package of agreements. It would provide a means to assess whether the decisions on reform taken now are indeed valid in 10 or 15 years' time. Decisions will be difficult to arrive at, but cannot and must not be endlessly avoided. It is time for all Member States to engage in negotiations on Security Council reform with dispatch, responsibly and openly in order to move the reform

process forward. The Security Council must be given the credibility it requires.

Let me end by expressing the sincere hope that the remarkable political momentum we witnessed during the Millennium Summit in September will be allowed to play its role also in the discussions of Security Council reform. If the spirit of the Millennium Summit were enabled to take its course, reform could be moved forward substantially during this Millennium Assembly, an outcome that the United Nations and its membership — and, I am sure, you, Mr. President — truly hope for, and deserve.

Mr. Kim Chang Guk (Democratic People's Republic of Korea): Security Council reform remains the most sensitive and complicated political issue in the United Nations. That fact is well substantiated by the seven-year-long discussions that have taken place on that one issue. We regret to note that this year's numerous meetings of the Open-ended Working Group on the Question of Equitable Representation on and Increase in the Membership of the Security Council and Other Matters related to the Security Council also ended with no concrete results. The main reason for the prolonged discussions lies, in our view, in the attempt to eliminate a privileged status in the United Nations through reform of the Security Council. The fact is that main obstacle to reform of the Security Council is the question of expansion of the permanent membership, and more specifically the linkage between the expansion of the permanent membership and the question of the veto.

A decision on expanding the permanent membership should not be taken before the question of the veto has been resolved, because the former is intrinsically linked to the latter. That is the general view shared by the majority of the membership. Furthermore, a similar majority of countries argue that increasing the permanent membership would promote sovereign equality among Member States, because the existing permanent membership constitutes a violation of the principle of sovereign equality, which is clearly set out in the Charter. Besides, critical issues such as the criteria for selecting permanent members, the total number and allocation of the new permanent seats and so forth remain to be resolved. In the light of what has happened throughout our deliberating process, it seems almost impossible that we can agree on solutions to those issues.

It has recently been rumoured that there is a move to push for adoption of a so-called framework resolution after the present debate, for the purpose of making expansion of the permanent membership a fait accompli. That would only make matters worse and would cause confrontation among countries. Taking into full consideration the circumstances relating to expansion of the permanent membership, my delegation has long suggested that the non-permanent membership be expanded first and that the expansion of the permanent membership be put on the back burner for the time being. There has been no change in that position. The maintenance of international peace and security is not necessarily subject to an increase in the number of permanent seats. In present circumstances, the existing regional imbalances in the composition of the Security Council would not be completely eliminated even were the Security Council to be expanded in both categories.

The solution should therefore focus on providing each region with maximal opportunity, following the expansion of the Security Council, to participate on an equal footing in solving disputes in the Council. To that end, we consider it urgent that the non-permanent membership be expanded first, so as to enable each region to be fully represented on the Security Council as early as possible and to play its due role in resolving its own security issues.

Even if the expansion of the permanent membership were agreed upon by consensus through full consultation among Member States in the future, a country such as Japan, which has not made a full apology or paid full compensation for its past crimes against humankind, is not qualified to be a new permanent member. The fact that Japan has failed even now to make a sincere apology and to pay compensation for its crimes before the international community is a clear indication that it harbours deep in its mind the ambition to re-invade other countries in the future. We strongly urge Japan to show a sincere attitude towards the maintenance of international peace and security with a clean slate regarding its past as soon as possible, rather than making frantic attempts to acquire a permanent seat.

My delegation looks forward, Mr. President, to the achievement of tangible progress during the coming year's sessions of the Working Group on Security Council reform under your able leadership.

Mr. Ling (Belarus) *(spoke in Russian)*: Today's discussion of this question in the General Assembly underlines its importance for the United Nations. The need to solve the problem of reform the Security Council was reaffirmed by our heads of State or Government during the Millennium Summit and in the general debate of the fifty-fifth session of the General Assembly.

We would like to stress that Belarus is firmly committed to the Security Council's playing the key role in maintaining international peace and security. We support the process of reform of the Security Council, taking into account the major changes in the international arena and the significant increase in the number of States Members of the United Nations. We are convinced that the effective reform of the Security Council can be achieved by consensus among all the participants in this process.

In the course of reform, Belarus attaches great importance to the efforts to ensure transparency, democracy and accountability in the working methods and procedures of the Council, including the decision-making process. In this context, we support the measures aimed at improving the flow of information regarding the Council's activities, increasing its cooperation with the General Assembly and further rationalizing the preparation and submission of its annual reports to the General Assembly. There is a need for increased transparency in the Council's work, first and foremost by providing adequate information on the outcome of closed consultations among Council members and on the activities of the sanctions Committees, and by increasing the number of briefings for States that are not Council members. Belarus has consistently advocated the Council's adoption of the practice of holding orientation discussions on the most important issues on the international agenda at the level of Ministers for Foreign Affairs. In this context, we support the initiative of Bangladesh to convene the meeting of the Council at the ministerial level to discuss the Council's role in United Nations peacekeeping activities.

As we consider the issues of reform, Belarus shares the understanding that the General Assembly's adoption of any resolution leading to amendments to the Charter of the United Nations must take place in accordance with Article 108 of the Charter.

The process of all-round and balanced reform of the Security Council must be conducted on the basis of the observance of and adherence to the principles of the sovereign equality of States and equitable geographical distribution.

The increase in the membership of the Security Council is a pivotal element of the reform. The removal of the current imbalances in terms of regional representation on the Council, which infringe on the interests of the world's developing majority, will facilitate a correction. This should be done through the adoption of the following measures.

First, any expansion of the Security Council must be based on the principles of equitable geographical distribution and sovereign equality of States. Secondly, the attainment of the broadest possible agreement on the entire package of reforms must not be subject to any predetermined time-frames. Thirdly, the membership of the Security Council in both categories should be increased by at least 11. Fourthly, additional seats in the permanent member category must be allocated to the countries of three developing regions — namely, Asia, Africa and Latin America and the Caribbean. Fifthly, in the absence of general agreement on the expansion of the permanent member category, expansion should take place in the non-permanent member category only, taking into account the interests and needs of all regional groups without exception.

The important instrument of the reform process of the Council remains the Open-ended Working Group on the Question of Equitable Representation on and Increase in the Membership of the Security Council and Other Matters related to the Security Council. During the fifty-fourth session of the General Assembly, we witnessed interesting discussions, new initiatives and proposals in the Working Group. The complicated nature of compromise was reflected at the stage of adopting the report. The delegation of Belarus deplores the fact that the section entitled "General Observations" was not included in the report, although it contained many interesting ideas for our further work.

We are convinced that the Group's activities at this session should be oriented towards finding the best possible generally accepted formula for the qualitative reform of the Security Council and its membership.

Mr. De Loecker (Belgium) *(spoke in French)*: Mr. President, let me begin by thanking you for having organized this debate. I would also like to thank your predecessor, Minister Theo-Ben Gurirab, and Ambassadors Dahlgren and De Saram for the excellent work they accomplished during the previous session of the General Assembly. We hope that this debate will allow us to make significant progress on the delicate issue of the reform of the Security Council, which has been the subject of intensive deliberations here for seven years now.

In their statements at the Millennium Summit, our heads of State or Government made the central role of the United Nations the dominant theme and the strengthening of this institution a key objective at the beginning of the twenty-first century. To attain this objective, they identified the priority need for an in-depth reform of the composition and functioning of the Security Council in order to enhance its representative character, transparency and efficiency — in short, to make it more democratic and legitimate in today's world. They thus gave a clear mandate to the General Assembly to intensify efforts to achieve a comprehensive reform of the Security Council in all its aspects as quickly as possible.

As far as Belgium is concerned, Prime Minister Guy Verhofstadt has stated that the time has come to conclude the deliberations on the reform process and that to do so it is necessary to relinquish positions that on the one hand may be too conservative, and on the other totally unrealistic. Our Foreign Minister, Louis Michel, echoed these ideas before the Assembly when he called for a well-balanced reform that responded to the wishes of the Member States.

Like many delegations that spoke before, Belgium was impressed by the large measure of support for the Millennium Summit's call for reform of the Council. The momentum created at that Summit, and extended in the General Assembly, should not be lost. I can assure you, Mr. President, that during this session of the Assembly Belgium is working and will continue to work to ensure that the impetus generated by the Millennium Summit will produce specific results.

As the Assembly is aware, Belgium is a member of a group of 10 countries called the G-10, which has put forward realistic operational proposals in order to improve the Council's legitimacy, as well as its representative character. Without entering into the details of the well-known positions of the G-10, I would like to recall that, in regard to cluster I, we wish to see an increase in both permanent and non-permanent members of the Security Council, and this should be in keeping with equitable geographical distribution.

Regarding the right of veto, we advocate a voluntary and partial limitation to its exercise. We also suggest a periodic review of the composition of the Council so that it can be kept in line with changes in the world geopolitical situation.

For seven years we have worked to move the deliberation process forward. Our efforts have proved successful on issues in cluster II. On cluster I, progress has been slower. This should not come as a surprise. The issues involved are delicate and are at the very heart of the functioning of the United Nations. This state of affairs, however, should not discourage us. On the contrary, by focusing our efforts, we should be able to overcome the difficulties. All of these issues have been visited and revisited, as shown by the large body of documents produced over the years.

We would suggest that, in the coming months, instead of holding general and repetitive meetings of the Open-ended Working Group on Security Council reform, we concentrate on areas where progress is possible in the short term.

Our debate and the broad consultations you will hold in coming months should enable you, Mr. President, and the Bureau to make significant progress in the work of the Open-ended Working Group. We sincerely hope that these consultations will engage delegations that have not fully participated in the discussion in the past. Like its partners in the Group of 10, some of which have spoken along the same lines, encourages and will actively assist you, Sir, in all your initiatives to move our debates forward on the various clusters in order to arrive as soon as possible at a package of proposals that is reasonable, well-balanced and acceptable to the General Assembly.

In conclusion, we believe that reaching an agreement on the issue of the reform of the Security Council is a task that, while very complex, remains feasible. If we wish to accomplish the mission our leaders assigned to us, we will all have to show flexibility and openness. The credibility of our institution is at stake. The case for speedy reform of the

Security Council is clear: starting today, either the Council adapts regularly to changing geopolitical realities or it will lose its prestige and authority.

We are confident that, under your guidance, Sir, we will rise to the challenge that was laid down by our leaders at the Millennium Summit.

Mr. Franco (Colombia) (*spoke in Spanish*): The Millennium Summit allowed us to

> "reaffirm our faith in the Organization and its Charter as indispensable foundations of a more peaceful, prosperous and just world". (*resolution 55/2, para. 1*)

The challenge to the Member States is thus to make the United Nations a more effective tool for the attainment of the many priorities identified at the Summit. Colombia enthusiastically endorses those common objectives, including that of intensifying

> "our efforts to achieve a comprehensive reform of the Security Council in all its aspects." (*ibid., para. 30*)

In the seven years we have worked towards reform, we can point to some significant achievements in certain aspects, especially in the Council's methods of work. As a non-permanent member elect for the years 2001-2002, Colombia is convinced of the need to consolidate these advances by seeking their institutionalization, while never ceasing to seek their greater transparency and efficiency. We are therefore in favour of greater interaction in this matter between the Working Group and the Security Council.

Despite the achievement of some progress in reform of the Council's methods of work, it is also clear that we need to delve deeper into a comprehensive reform of the Council to include its expansion, decision-making process and, above all, the question of the veto. Recent experience has shown us the need to democratize the Council in order to strengthen its legitimacy. In this context, we believe that the question of the veto is central to the decision-making process, because it is perfectly futile to claim to reform the membership of the Council without also trying to resolve the question of the veto. Far from resolving existing differences, that would simply exacerbate them.

We have all agreed on the need to reform the Council in order to make it more representative, democratic, transparent and responsible to the other Member States. In this regard, we are convinced that the success of this aspiration will depend on preserving, in all aspects of reform, the principles of the sovereign equality of States and equitable geographical representation. We must not lose sight of the fact that the final shape of reform would be disappointing if the inequalities of representation were to be magnified, on the one hand, between developed and developing countries and, on the other, among the developing countries themselves. In order to avoid such inequalities, it is necessary for the regional Groups to participate in the allocation of regional seats to their members. Each region has its own dynamics and formulas for participation and it is clear that there is no formula that can be applied universally to all regions.

The Working Group has consolidated its status as the most appropriate, essential and auspicious means for all the States Members of the United Nations to discuss and negotiate transparently the reform of the Council. The transparency guaranteed in the Working Group is the keystone of confidence; its lack would cloud the atmosphere and prevent a good-faith exchange of views. In this respect, we believe that the skills and original approach of the Bureau — in particular, its Chairman — could encourage the participation of a greater number of delegations in the deliberations bringing us closer to the desired general agreement. In that context, we cannot fail to state our satisfaction in the leadership and experience that you, Mr. President, will bring to our deliberations. We wish you the best of success.

In conclusion, may I say that the Working Group has been entrusted with many of the aspirations born at the Millennium Summit. It has been a forum that has respected the interests of its member States in the determination of the future system of collective international security. As is natural in a democratic international community, these changes must be the result of an authentic general agreement, and not of impositions based on artificial time limits, partial solutions or the so-called quick fix. Our greatest asset is to recognize that differences remain and that there are no good or bad positions — only national positions.

Mr. Balzan (Malta): It has been reiterated time and time again that, if the United Nations fails to reform itself in a comprehensive and meaningful way, it runs the serious risk of slipping into irrelevance.

Without an overall review of the Security Council as the body entrusted with the primary responsibility for the maintenance of peace and security, this reform process cannot be completed.

This is so not only because the Security Council is at the centre of the mandate of the Organization, but because its actions have direct implications on all the other organs of the United Nations and most of its specialized agencies.

We must heed the call of the Millennium Declaration to move forward with determination towards a comprehensive review of the Security Council, encompassing all of its aspects, including the veto. Consensus has emerged on the need to effect changes in the Security Council's composition, decision-making process and working methods.

In effecting these changes, we should draw on the experiences of the international community in terms of institutional management. In this respect, history has taught us many important lessons, some of them painful. The lesson that shines through is that, for international institutions to function at their optimum level, they must be guided by the principles that are consistently upheld by the United Nations: democracy, transparency and accountability. If these are the bases of the reforms that we seek to implement at all levels of governance at the international and national level, then surely we can accept no less for the Security Council.

A restructured Security Council must allow for more members to be elected for limited terms in a manner that respects the role of regional groups in the allocation of seats. Wider and more equitable representation must also be part of an expanded Council.

The decision-making process must reflect the reality that there is no monopoly of wisdom or knowledge amongst the members of the Council and, thus, non-members should be encouraged to play an active role in bringing the Council to the best possible conclusions.

Clearly, the countries that contribute troops to particular peacekeeping operations, as well as those most affected by the issue under consideration by the Council, deserve particular attention.

On the issue of the working methods of the Council, it is clear that under the wise and skilful guidance of Ambassador Dahlgren of Sweden and Ambassador de Saram of Sri Lanka, the Open-ended Working Group on Security Council reform has made remarkable progress on many issues. This achievement must be safeguarded through the implementation by the Security Council of the cluster II issues upon which consensus was achieved in the Working Group.

It is incumbent upon us to seek to match the commendable progress achieved by the Working Group on cluster II issues with similar advances on the more contentious issues of cluster I. The progress that was achieved did not result from Member States adamantly sticking to their positions, but from the flexibility that is the hallmark of any true negotiating process.

The time is ripe for the emergence of a working solution to the seemingly irreconcilable positions on the table before us today. It is time to seek a better understanding of the concerns that underline the divergent opinions that we have heard, with the aim of achieving a solution that commands the support of the general membership of the Organization.

At this point in time, the Open-ended Working Group remains the only viable forum where this process can take place in a manner that ensures that the principle of the equality of all Member States is respected in all aspects of the reform process.

Ms. Ibraimova (Kyrgyzstan): My delegation welcomes the deliberations on an extremely important issue for all Member States. Today's discussion aims at the reform process in United Nations matters. I will therefore reaffirm certain concepts that have been the basis of the Kyrgyz delegation's position on this topic.

In discussing the agenda item on the question of equitable representation on and increase in the membership of the Security Council, we are analysing and examining the different aspects of restructuring the Security Council, the most vital organ for the maintenance of international peace and security. Members of the Security Council continue to play a most complex role that directly affects, not only the prospects for United Nations development, but also the future structure of world security.

Six years have passed since the Working Group was created. Along with many comprehensive meetings, clear differences still remain as to the size of the proposed increase in the number of permanent and non-permanent seats in the Security Council,

geographical representation for permanent membership and the veto right, among other issues.

Consensus amongst Member States exists only on the issue of the need to increase not only the Council's representativeness, but also its legitimacy and its efficiency in order to make it a more democratic organ.

On the question of the expansion of the membership of the Council, we support the proposal to increase the number of seats in both categories — permanent and non-permanent. Expansion of the membership must be responsive to the changed global political and economic climate, reflecting the new realities in the global arena and respecting the principles of sovereign equality among all States and equitable geographical distribution.

Kyrgyzstan also attaches great importance to the need to improve further the effectiveness and transparency of the work of the Council. On the threshold of the twenty-first century, we believe that reform of the Security Council should be based on a comprehensive package that includes not only expansion of the Council's membership, but also improvement in its working methods and changes in the process of decision-making.

It is a widely acknowledged fact that the Security Council falls short in handling the many challenges and geopolitical realities of the contemporary world. This problem is as relevant as ever and is gradually becoming a key concern with implications for the further evolution of the United Nations. It has become perfectly clear today that, without decisive measures and actions to reform the Council, the universal mechanism for peacekeeping, preventive diplomacy and post-conflict reconstruction, will become even less functional.

If the Security Council is to remain relevant and effective in addressing international challenges, its capacity to meet those challenges must be enhanced in accordance with present-day realities. It is for this reason that the issue of the reform of the Security Council has been a matter of common interest and remains in the forefront of our agenda.

We live under new circumstances and have a new world order, requiring that the principle of equity be applied to the Security Council.

I would also like to take this opportunity to wish the members of the Security Council every success in their important role of maintaining international peace and security. The Kyrgyz delegation committed itself to work closely with you, Mr. President, and with members of the Working Group and with all delegations in order to reach our common goals in finding the best possible solution for the reform of the Security Council.

Mr. Ducaru (Romania) (*spoke in French*): Allow me to thank you, Mr. President, for organizing this debate, which could restore momentum to the discussions on the reform of the Security Council. The impressive number of speakers who have already taken the floor during this debate shows the interest of Member States in Security Council reform and their support for pursuing this process with resolve.

Like many other speakers, we believe that the work of the Open-ended Working Group over the last year is a basis on which the General Assembly can continue to build. My country attaches importance to, and intends to contribute to, the efforts to adapt the Organization to today's world, in particular by reforming the Security Council in such a way as to enable it to operate efficiently while enjoying uncontested legitimacy.

We welcome the reaffirmation of this objective in the Millennium Declaration, adopted by our heads of State and Government, who decided

> "To intensify our efforts to achieve a comprehensive reform of the Security Council in all its aspects." (*resolution 55/2, United Nations Millennium Declaration, para. 30*)

In this context, I would encourage you, Mr. President, to make full use of the work that has been done by the Working Group, as well as of the different consultation mechanisms available to you so that it will be easier to reach general agreement. After six years of in-depth examination of the proposals made in the Working Group, elements of Security Council reform are already on the table. The time has come to formulate a final compromise that the General Assembly can endorse.

The Romanian delegation has had several opportunities to present its position on this matter at the highest level. Allow me to express some thoughts on what credible reform of the Council would entail.

First, the two categories of members should be increased, so that the Security Council better reflects

changes in the world. There should be new non-permanent members, including some from Eastern Europe, and the new permanent members should include representatives of the developing countries of Africa, Asia and Latin America, sitting side by side with industrialized countries. This would reinforce the prestige and the democratic nature of the Council. The parameters of such an enlargement must be set in such a way as to assure the best possible representation in the Council, without undermining its efficiency.

Secondly, there is the question of the right of veto — a subject that is both complex and delicate and that is inextricably related to enlargement. We remain flexible in the discussions on a credible limitation on the scope and use of this right. For reasons of principle, there must be no differences between the status of permanent members of the Council, whether new or old.

Thirdly, with regard to improving the Council's working methods, we welcome the provisional agreement reached on a large number of questions related to working methods, and at the same time encourage the Working Group to pursue its efforts to make progress in the examination of all aspects of its mandate. It is also worth noting that recent modifications in procedures are on the right track leading to greater transparency in the work of the Council.

Finally, we believe that it will be beneficial if we can reach agreement on a mechanism for periodic review of decisions taken in the framework of the reform of the Security Council. This could even exert a positive influence on our future consultations on other aspects of the reform.

It is in this spirit that the delegation of Romania supports the adoption of the draft resolution contained in the report of the Open-ended Working Group. Romania is prepared to cooperate with you, Mr. President, in order to reach the very important objectives that have been set on this matter.

Mr. Zackheos (Cyprus): Since the establishment in 1993 of the Open-ended Working Group on the reform of the Security Council, its yearly reports have been submitted, considered and adopted by the General Assembly. Yet, even though there is agreement on the objective of reforming the Council and increasing its membership, a clearly acceptable proposal for enlargement still eludes us.

The delegation of Cyprus has on many occasions and at the highest level placed on record its views on this all-important issue. We feel that the enlargement is necessary in view of the increase in the membership of the United Nations. We also feel that an increase will render it more participative and more representative. Its decisions will be more credible and authoritative, as representing all the Member States on behalf of which it is mandated by the United Nations Charter to act.

We also support the expansion of the Council by increasing both permanent and non-permanent members on the basis of an equitable geographical distribution of seats whereby the present imbalanced situation between developed and developing countries is addressed. A criterion in according permanent status should be a considerable contribution to the budget and to the maintenance of international peace and security and the other purposes of the United Nations.

The Security Council must be prepared to address the vast challenges of the new millennium as a guarantor of peace and security. Expanding the Council and further improving its working methods would have beneficial effects. We understand the frustration of many countries over the lack of progress in this area. We recognize, of course, the positive steps made in the Open-ended Working Group, which has clarified the positions of the different groups and individual countries.

It is apparent, however, that what is needed now for the enlargement of the Council is political will and flexibility for an overwhelmingly supported decision. There is already general realization that reform of the Security Council is inevitable. We hope, therefore, that by expanding the areas of concurrence in previous sessions of the Open-ended Working Group we will be making positive steps towards general agreement.

Reform of the Security Council is not only a matter of its composition and size. It entails also reviewing its working methods so as to provide even more transparency and greater accountability to the general membership of the United Nations. We must welcome here the progress made in the working methods of the Security Council, especially on transparency. We view, for example, the summing up by the outgoing Presidents, the briefings at the end of its meetings by the President of the Security Council, consultations with troop-contributing States and the

provision of background information in its reports to the General Assembly as positive developments.

There is no doubt that more transparency is needed about the consultations in the Council's informal meetings, as well as information and assessments as to how or to what extent the views of non-members of the Security Council that are participating in its debates on items of concern to them influence or fail to influence the decision-making process. The Council must do more to increase the participation of non-members in its deliberations. Closed meetings frustrate such participation. In this regard, we favour the recent Security Council practice of holding more meetings open to the general membership. My delegation has participated in open meetings of the Security Council and expressed its views on such issues as women and peace and the situation in Africa.

In conclusion, I would like to reiterate our view that, ultimately, the credibility of the Security Council hangs on its ability to see its decisions being implemented. The non-implementation of Security Council resolutions, especially those that were adopted many years ago, is a matter of utmost concern to my delegation. International legality is further reinforced by the finding of solutions to international problems within the parameters and on the basis of Security Council resolutions.

Mr. Al-Adoufi (Yemen) (*spoke in Arabic*): It is my pleasure to thank you, Sir, on behalf of my delegation, for having initiated the discussion on this important agenda item. We also salute the Open-ended Working Group on the Question of Equitable Representation on and Increase in the Membership of the Security Council and Other Matters Related to the Security Council.

The consideration of this issue and the pursuit of consultations on the various positions set out by delegations in the General Assembly are part of a new and praiseworthy trend that may allow us to reach a common formula and general agreement on this question. The purpose of reform would be to restructure the Council and to expand its membership to reflect the new changes in international relations in the modern world on the basis of equality and justice.

Changes and reforms are necessary. The constant reaffirmation of the need for such reform reflects our commitment to the true aspiration of making the Council genuinely representative. There is much ground to be covered and the task ahead is difficult. We need sincere political will and the courage to take firm decisions to improve the Organization's capacity to discharge its responsibilities for the maintenance of international peace and security.

Reform of the Council; fair and equitable representation of the Organization's membership; equality among States; transparency in the Council's working methods; expansion of the Council's membership to reflect the increase of the number of States Members of the United Nations — especially among the developing countries — in both categories of membership; the need to curtail the right of veto; definition of the relationship between the Council and other organs; working methods and transparency are all issues on which we must reach agreement. It is clear that such agreement currently does not exist.

Among those proposals made in 1997 was one on which agreement might have been reached, but it was not the only proposal likely to make its way through long and difficult negotiations. A majority decision could not be reached on that proposal. We understand that Japan and Germany aspire to permanent membership of the Council, but we would refer to the papers submitted by the Arab and the non-aligned countries on this issue, which call for equal representation. The United Nations must set an example of such equality and partnership. There is a promising trend under way to advocate equality in international relations, but it will require political will if the international community is to find a solution to the ever-changing situation at the dawn of the new century.

Mr. Filippi Balestra (San Marino): First of all, I should like to thank President Gurirab and the two Vice-Chairmen of the of Open-ended Working Group on the reform of the Security Council, Ambassador De Saram and Ambassador Dahlgren, for the excellent work carried out at the previous session of the General Assembly. We deeply appreciated their efficiency, availability and diplomatic skills.

At this stage of our discussion, and after seven years of negotiations with the Working Group, it is hard to be original as far as the enlargement of the Security Council is concerned. Here we are, with this feeling of déjà vu and frustration, not knowing what to do to rescue our discussions from the situation of

virtual stagnation in which they currently lie. The cruellest aspect of this situation is the fact that we have not been able to reach an agreement although we are pursuing the same goal of wanting to make the Security Council more representative, more democratic and more transparent by improving its structure and its working methods.

In my view, it does not seem logical that, although we share the same purpose, we have not yet found a way to bring ourselves closer to an agreement. Sadly, the lack of flexibility has prevented us from introducing those changes needed to reform this organ. Indeed, most of the States engaged in the discussion have maintained their initial positions without introducing adjustments that would make things more acceptable to other parties.

In this unpromising situation, some countries may think that the establishment of a time frame could represent an easy way to a quick solution. They are also attempting to connect the reform of the Security Council with decisions related to the scale of assessments of contributions to the budget of the Organization. San Marino is against these dangerous approaches because it is convinced that a hasty decision reached in the present climate, characterized by serious divergences and fractures, could seriously jeopardize the future functioning of the United Nations.

The position of my country on the enlargement of the Security Council is well known. San Marino is in favour of increasing the non-permanent members only. In fact, we are opposed to any reform that may create inequalities among States.

San Marino also considers that the "quick fix" would represent only an approximate solution. It would freeze an organization that should, on the contrary, reflect the political, social and economic changes of the world. We are aware of the fact that there are countries that, because of their contributions to or their influence on international affairs, believe they are entitled to play a more active role in the Security Council. Even assuming that their claims are legitimate, we are convinced that their being entrusted with the privilege of permanent membership is not the right answer. Permanency and the veto run counter to the basic principles upon which modern international society is organized.

Furthermore, an increase in the permanent members of the Security Council would constitute a dangerous precedent that would be applicable to other organs of the United Nations system. This would compromise the principle of equality among States.

In my country's view, any enlargement should equitably address the interests of all Member States, correcting the current imbalances, and the regional groups should continue to play a basic role in the allocation of Security Council seats to their members. Democratic election in the General Assembly should also remain as a *conditio sine qua non* for becoming a member of the Security Council.

We are convinced that we should continue consultations within the Working Group, which remains the most appropriate forum for an open and general discussion among all countries, without exclusions — a forum to which all Member States may bring their own contributions to this important debate.

My delegation believes that the time has come to start exploring new ideas, since the enlargement of the group of privileged States has been proven to be sterile in the past seven years. The time has come to test our imaginations and creativity in order to overcome this impasse. We must start analysing all the proposals that have been submitted and all the ideas that have been expressed during our discussions — those proposals and ideas that never received sufficient consideration. It may happen that one of these will place us on the right path. It is more and more evident that insisting on the old, known proposals will lead us nowhere.

I hope we may continue our work this year in a more flexible atmosphere as we search for common goals and for a truthful implementation of the principles of the United Nations Charter.

Mr. Mmualefe (Botswana): The number of speakers on this item this year, as in previous years, attests to the importance that the membership of the United Nations attaches to the need to reform the Security Council. It is, however, a source of great concern and frustration that despite wide debate of and interest in this issue there is yet no solution in sight. There is yet no indication that the permanent members of the Security Council are ready to engage in any meaningful discussion with the rest of the membership of the United Nations.

Member States, individually as well as in the context of regions, have made suggestions on how such reform can be achieved. The African Group of States,

of which my delegation is a part, remains underrepresented, especially in the permanent-seat category of membership. The Group has proposed and maintains that the Security Council should be expanded in both categories of membership — that is, permanent and non-permanent — to bring the total membership to not less than 26. The new permanent members should have the same prerogatives and powers as those enjoyed by the current members, including the use of the veto.

The Group should then be allocated three seats in the non-permanent category and two in the permanent category. The distribution of these within the continent would be determined by the African Group of States. Only through expansion can the representativeness of the Council be ensured.

We all know that present-day realities are quite different from those of 55 years ago and that the Security Council, as with everything else, has to maintain its relevance and legitimacy. By refusing to reform itself, the Council is denying a large proportion of the world community an opportunity to express their views, as well as to play a more meaningful role in the maintenance of international peace and security.

My delegation is concerned not only about the numbers of new members, but also, importantly, with the working methods of the Council, its decision-making and the use of the veto. Member States have consistently called on the Security Council to reform its methods and decision-making to ensure more transparency and accountability. Here we are encouraged by progress achieved by the Open-ended Working Group on the Question of Equitable Representation on and Increase in the Membership of the Security Council and Other Matters related to the Security Council in its deliberations during the fifty-fourth General Assembly session. Much agreement was noted regarding how the Security Council should conduct its business — for example, with respect to its programme of work and the agenda of its meetings and informal consultations of the whole, the briefing given by the President of the Security Council for non-members, meetings with troop-contributing countries and other countries contributing to peacekeeping operations, and so forth.

It is also encouraging to note that on the ground there is much improvement as to how the Council conducts its business. There are now more open meetings on important issues, as well as open briefings for non-members, which have been found to be quite useful. This should be an indication that the work of the Working Group is beginning to pay dividends and, therefore, requires further support from the Members.

Much, however, still needs to be done, particularly in ensuring that such good practices are permanently institutionalized, so that they can become the standard against which to measure the Council's performance at any time. The open briefings referred to above should also be conducted in such a way that the views of the general membership can be taken into account — rather than having them as a one-way process.

On the question of the veto, the only agreement reached by the Working Group is with respect to the veto's limited use. My delegation believes this to be only an interim measure and that in a truly reformed Council there would be no need to maintain it. We have always maintained that the veto is an undemocratic instrument that deserves to be scrapped. We look forward to its total elimination.

That there has been some agreement with respect to some aspects of the reform of the Security Council should give us more determination to tackle the ever-more important issue of the expansion of the Council, so that we can all contribute to world peace and security as equal Members of the United Nations.

In conclusion, I wish to thank the Open-ended Working Group — under the able leadership of the former Permanent Representative of Sweden, Mr. Dahlgren, and the Permanent Representative of Sri Lanka, Mr. De Saram, acting as Vice-Chairmen of the Working Group — for the progress achieved thus far. My delegation stands ready to participate in and contribute to further discussions of the Working Group.

Mr. Johan Thani (Brunei Darussalam): Once again, Brunei Darussalam is pleased to participate in the discussion on the question of equitable representation on and increase in the membership of the Security Council and related matters. We thank the President of the fifty-fourth session of the General Assembly and both Vice-Chairmen of the Open-ended Working Group on Security Council reform for their comprehensive report. We appreciate their efforts in this matter.

As an important institution charged with major issues affecting world peace and security, Brunei Darussalam is supportive of an expansion of the Council in both the permanent and non-permanent categories of membership on the basis of equitable geographical representation. Recognizing the urgency and importance of arriving at a solution acceptable to all, there should be no time frame for discussing the issue of restructuring the Security Council. We support the position of the Non-Aligned Movement that there should be no quick-fix solution to the expansion of the Security Council.

There is also the question of the veto, which we believe is intrinsically linked to the issue of expansion. Brunei Darussalam would like to see the use of the veto curtailed, with a view to its eventual elimination.

In other areas related to Security Council reform, Brunei Darussalam welcomes the improvements made in its working methods — for example, the increased interaction between members of the Council and other Member States, made possible through the larger participation of Member States of the United Nations in the informal consultations of the Council. In addition, we feel that there are other issues that need attention, such as the strengthening of cooperation and coordination between the Security Council and other bodies of the United Nations in the area of international peace and security.

Brunei Darussalam believes that the reform of the Security Council is of great importance for its functioning and legitimacy. We acknowledge that, while difficult areas remain to be agreed upon, reform is possible. The limited progress made due to the complexity of the issue should not discourage us in our effort to arrive at an agreement. What is important is the necessary political will and determination to find concrete proposals. Brunei Darussalam therefore hopes that the Working Group will continue its efforts to identify an acceptable solution in order to make real progress on this issue.

In his report entitled "We the peoples", the Secretary-General stressed that the Security Council should be reformed to enable it to carry out its responsibilities more effectively and to give it greater legitimacy in the eyes of the world's people. Leaders at the Millennium Summit also addressed the need for comprehensive reform of the Security Council in all its aspects. It is our duty to heed those calls and therefore to intensify our efforts to reform the Security Council.

Mr. Enkhsaikhan (Mongolia): At the Millennium Summit, leaders of our countries pledged to spare no effort to make the United Nations a more effective instrument for pursuing the noble goals of peace and development. That pledge not only reaffirms our faith in the United Nations as a unique global institution designed to address major challenges, but it also raises expectations about the capacity of the Organization to realize our common goals and aspirations. An important part of living up to the expectations raised by the Millennium Summit would be to reform the Council.

Discussions on the issue of reforming the Council have proved to be protracted, and the results have so far been very modest at best. Clearly, the first steps towards a Council that is more transparent and accessible to the general membership are to be welcomed. My delegation is therefore pleased to note the ongoing efforts to ensure greater participation by non-members of the Council in its work through the organization of thematic debates and discussions. The holding of more regular meetings in an open format and frequent consultations with parties concerned will certainly contribute to the overall reform efforts.

That is especially so in the case of peacekeeping operations, where regular consultations with troop-contributing countries could be useful for enhancing their effectiveness. In that respect, my delegation supports the adoption of Council resolution 1327 (2000) in response to the report of the Panel on United Nations Peace Operations. We also believe that the Council should engage in greater cooperation with regional organizations in addressing issues pertaining to regional stability and security.

However, despite the progress I have mentioned, the reform process has so far not brought us closer to resolving some of the fundamental issues on the agenda of the Open-ended Working Group, especially the issue of enlarging the Council's membership. My delegation wishes to reiterate its position that the reform of the Council should lead to enlargement of the membership in both the permanent and non-permanent categories in a just and equitable manner that ensures the representation of both developed and developing countries.

Like many other delegations, we believe that some States capable of assuming global responsibility for the maintenance of international peace and security could be represented in the Council as permanent members. At the same time, we advocate the view that enlarging the category of permanent membership should duly reflect the Organization's greatly increased membership from the ranks of developing countries from Asia, Africa and Latin America. A reasonable increase in non-permanent seats will reflect the representative character of the Council and enable a growing number of Member States to contribute to its work.

An essential part of the Council's reform should be the question of the veto, the use of which should be considerably curtailed.

It has been seven years since we started our discussion of Council reform. We have been able to agree on a number of important issues such as the general need to enlarge the membership of the Council, and how to improve its working methods. The time has now come for us all to agree on the specifics of the enlargement of the Council and on restricting the use of the veto.

We believe that negotiations on those two questions should continue, bearing in mind the 10 elements mentioned in paragraph 6 of annex XIII to the report of the Open-ended Working Group (A/54/47).

Mrs. Baldeh (Gambia): Allow me first of all, Mr. President, to congratulate you on the able manner in which you have been guiding the deliberations of the General Assembly at the present session. I have no doubt that you will steer them to a successful conclusion. In like manner, let me also pay tribute to your predecessor, His Excellency Mr. Theo-Ben Gurirab, who served as Chairman of the Open-ended Working Group on the Question of Equitable Representation on and Increase in the Membership of the Security Council and Other Matters related to the Security Council, as well as to the Group's two Vice-Chairman, Ambassadors Hans Dahlgren of Sweden and John de Saram of Sri Lanka, and to all representatives who have participated in the negotiations over the past seven years. My delegation also expresses its appreciation for the report of the Working Group, contained in document A/54/47, which provides a useful insight into the consultations that have been taking place and which will significantly facilitate our deliberations.

My delegation associates itself with the statement made by the representative of Egypt on behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement.

Reform of the Security Council is a common goal of the United Nations membership as a whole. There is no doubt about the universal consensus that the Security Council needs to be overhauled to make it more representative of the Organization's membership and more responsive to the various challenges that have emerged since it was formed. Nor is there any doubt that any reform of the Security Council must start with the expansion of its membership to correct the anomaly whereby certain regions of the world, particularly Africa, are excluded from the permanent membership category.

My delegation therefore welcomes the heightened sense of urgency about the need for Security Council reform, as well as the constructive and engaged climate that has been prevailing during the sessions of the Open-ended Working Group. My delegation, however, notes with regret that after seven years of discussions in the Group, including five substantive sessions amounting to 32 meetings during the fifty-fourth session of the General Assembly alone, there are still substantial differences that remain unresolved, such as the issue of new permanent members.

Nonetheless, my delegation would like to express its support for expansion of the Security Council in both the permanent and the non-permanent categories. Indeed, it is inconceivable that, despite the substantial increase in the membership of the United Nations over the years, the composition of the permanent membership of the Security Council, the Organization's most important pillar, has remained largely homogeneous decades after the Council's foundation. It is worth noting that two thirds of the world's population, in developing countries, is denied representation in the permanent membership, and that the latter is composed mostly of developed countries. It is regrettable that certain countries that could make a significant contribution to the Organization by virtue of their economic and political standing globally are denied the opportunity to do so.

With regard to the non-permanent membership, less than 10 per cent of the general membership has representation on the Council, in the light of the

increase in United Nations membership. In that connection, I would like to reiterate an observation my delegation has made in other forums, regarding the power of veto. The veto is an anachronism. Indeed, it is a glaring contradiction of the ideal of democracy that we all aspire to. That in this day and age a limited number of countries, which are members of an exclusive club, continue to have the unchecked capacity to wield an invincible sword to benefit their own national — and, I venture to say, minority — interests at the expense of the interests of the majority is an aberration. Therefore, pending its elimination, the use of the veto should be restricted to matters arising within the context of the provisions of Chapter VII of the Charter. Let me add that perpetuation of the status quo is tantamount to desecration of the very democratic foundations on which the United Nations was built.

With regard to the working methods of the Council, I am happy to note that, thanks to the work of the Open-ended Working Group, there has been some improvement, as indicated, for instance, by the holding of briefings immediately after informal consultations and by the holding of open meetings. That is a good sign. However, there is still a long way to the end of the tunnel. My delegation therefore fully endorses the recommendations contained in annex XIII of the report of the Open-ended Working Group, relating in particular to the need to continue the discussions given the progress made so far. In that way the dialogue would be kept alive, with a view, one hopes, to coming up with a reform package that would take account of the interests of all Member States, on the basis of equitable geographical representation and on the principle of sovereign equality as stipulated in Article 2, paragraph 1, of the Charter, thereby laying the groundwork for real, not cosmetic, reform of the Security Council.

Finally, Mr. President, I wish you and the other members of the Bureau of the Open-ended Working Group all the best in carrying out the very important tasks with which you have been entrusted. I am confident that, with your steadfast dedication and vast experience, the Group's work will be crowned with success.

Mr. Mbanefo (Nigeria): Let me start by referring the Assembly to the illuminating statement of the President of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, His Excellency Mr. Olusegun Obasanjo, at the Millennium Summit, during which he declared that

> "We are at a new dawn; what it portends we cannot say. But this much we owe to ourselves and to succeeding generations: a world where all nations, all races and all peoples can live in dignity and in peace with one another. We must all resolve to strengthen and reinvigorate the United Nations for the work and the world ahead.
>
> "The reform of the United Nations, in particular the expansion and democratization of the Security Council, is therefore a task which can no longer be postponed if our Organization is to face up to the challenges of the new millennium." (*A/55/PV.7, pp. 13-14*)

It is against that backdrop that my delegation sets its statement on the report of the Open-ended Working Group on the Question of Equitable Representation on and Increase in the Membership of the Security Council and Other Matters related to the Security Council (A/54/47). The Nigerian delegation believes that it has never been the purpose of the United Nations to prescribe democracy and change for its Members while making little or no progress in the democratization of its own organs, such as the Security Council. The present composition of the Security Council, an outgrowth of the geopolitical and geostrategic considerations of the victorious allied Powers during the Second World War, is certainly lopsided in favour of a particular group. We believe that the United Nations will not be strengthened if reform concentrates only on cost-effectiveness, efficiency and better coordination. Indeed, no reform of the United Nations will be complete unless issues relating to the expansion and the working methods of the Security Council are addressed. A comprehensive package to reform the Security Council remains, therefore, a priority project for my delegation, and indeed for the delegations of most Member States of our indispensable Organization.

Regrettably, after more than seven years of these deliberations, the Open-ended Working Group on the expansion of the Council and other related matters has made no appreciable progress. Gripped with creeping paralysis in its working methods and decision-making process, the Open-ended Working Group has not been able to come up with any recommendations on Cluster I issues. Nigeria therefore believes that the time has come for a review of the working methods, and perhaps of the decision-making process, of the Open-ended Working Group.

It is the view of my delegation that the Security Council should be expanded in both permanent and non-permanent categories. Since its inception in 1945, the Security Council has undergone a modification in its membership only once, in 1965, when the original number of 11 was increased to 15, made up of the same 5 permanent members and 4 additional non-permanent members, for a total of 10 in the category of non-permanent membership. The present mood for reform can therefore be better served if expansion takes place in both categories of membership on the basis of equitable geographical representation.

Other criteria, such as emerging regional players and centres of economic power, may also be taken into consideration. In this regard, Nigeria unequivocally supports the position of the Organization of African States (OAU), which calls for the allocation of two permanent seats for Africa in an enlarged Security Council. How can the United Nations continue to justify a situation in which Africa is the only continent without a permanent seat in the Council? Africa, with its 53 Member States, collectively constitutes almost one third of the entire membership of the United Nations. We therefore believe that a decision by the OAU to seek two permanent seats for Africa in a reformed and expanded Council cannot be ignored.

On the related question of the veto as a voting instrument in the Security Council, Nigeria supports the curtailment of its use by the permanent members of the Council. We even support its abolition if it is the consensus of the international community. However, if the veto is to be retained in its present form, it is the view of my delegation that it should be extended to new permanent members of the Council. Denial of the veto to new permanent members in an enlarged Security Council will not only be discriminatory, but it will also create two different classes of permanent membership and a situation that does not promote cohesion and stability in the Council.

In order to forestall any abuses of the exercise of the veto, if the veto is retained, it may be necessary for the General Assembly to adopt a resolution reminding the permanent members that they are acting on behalf of the United Nations as a whole. They should therefore exercise the veto only when they consider the question to be of vital importance, taking into consideration the interests of the United Nations as a whole, and should state in each case in writing on what grounds they consider that condition to be present. Nigeria believes that the veto should not be used for the attainment of selfish and parochial interests.

Nigeria wishes to make the following suggestions, which it believes will enable the Open-ended Working Group to achieve appreciable progress on Cluster I issues.

There should be a meeting of Member States twice a year at the level of permanent representatives to focus attention primarily on Cluster I issues. Decisions taken in such a meeting will augment or supplant decisions in the Open-ended Working Group.

Secondly, the Bureau of the Open-ended Working Group should reach out to Member States with a view to refocusing their attention on Cluster I issues.

Thirdly, it may be expedient for the Open-ended Working Group to dispose of issues under Cluster II, since appreciable progress has been made in that area, to enable it to concentrate its attention on Cluster I matters.

A mini-summit of the five permanent members of the Security Council, concentrating on Cluster I issues and unequivocally committing themselves, severally and collectively, in a summit declaration to the expansion of the Council in both permanent and non-permanent membership categories, will not only re-energize the Open-ended Working Group, but will also refocus its attention on the need for the expeditious realization of its mandate.

My delegation notes with appreciation the appreciable progress which the Open-ended Working Group has recorded on Cluster II issues. As reflected in the report, the areas where significant progress has been made include greater transparency in informal consultations, more involvement of troop-contributing countries, more formal open meetings of the Council, a more substantial report of the Security Council to the General Assembly and more prompt and detailed briefings on the Council's activities by the President-in-office.

It is gratifying to note that the Security Council is already implementing some of the suggestions in these areas. However, it is a matter of great regret that there was no agreement this year on any general observations, and, given this low progress so far, particularly on Cluster I issues, it is our view, as has already been stated, that the working methods of the Open-ended Working Group should be reviewed.

Member States should demonstrate the political will needed for the actualization of the democratization and expansion of the Security Council. About 155 countries made references in their statements during the Millennium Summit to the need for Security Council reform. Their views were reaffirmed by the United Nations Millennium Declaration, in which Member States resolved to

> "intensify our efforts to achieve a comprehensive reform of the Security Council in all its aspects." (*resolution 55/2, United Nations Millennium Declaration, para. 30*)

Nigeria, as a responsible member of the international community, will continue to work together with like-minded States both within and outside the Open-ended Working Group to achieve the noble objectives of reforming the Security Council with a view to making it more representative, more democratic and more transparently accountable to Member States.

Programme of work

The President: I should like to inform members of the following additions and changes to the programme of work of the General Assembly.

On Friday, 1 December 2000, in the afternoon the General Assembly will take up agenda item 175, "The role of diamonds in fuelling conflict", which was originally scheduled for Monday, 20 November.

On Monday, 4 December 2000, in the afternoon, the Assembly will consider the reports of the Third Committee.

The meeting rose at 8.25 p.m.